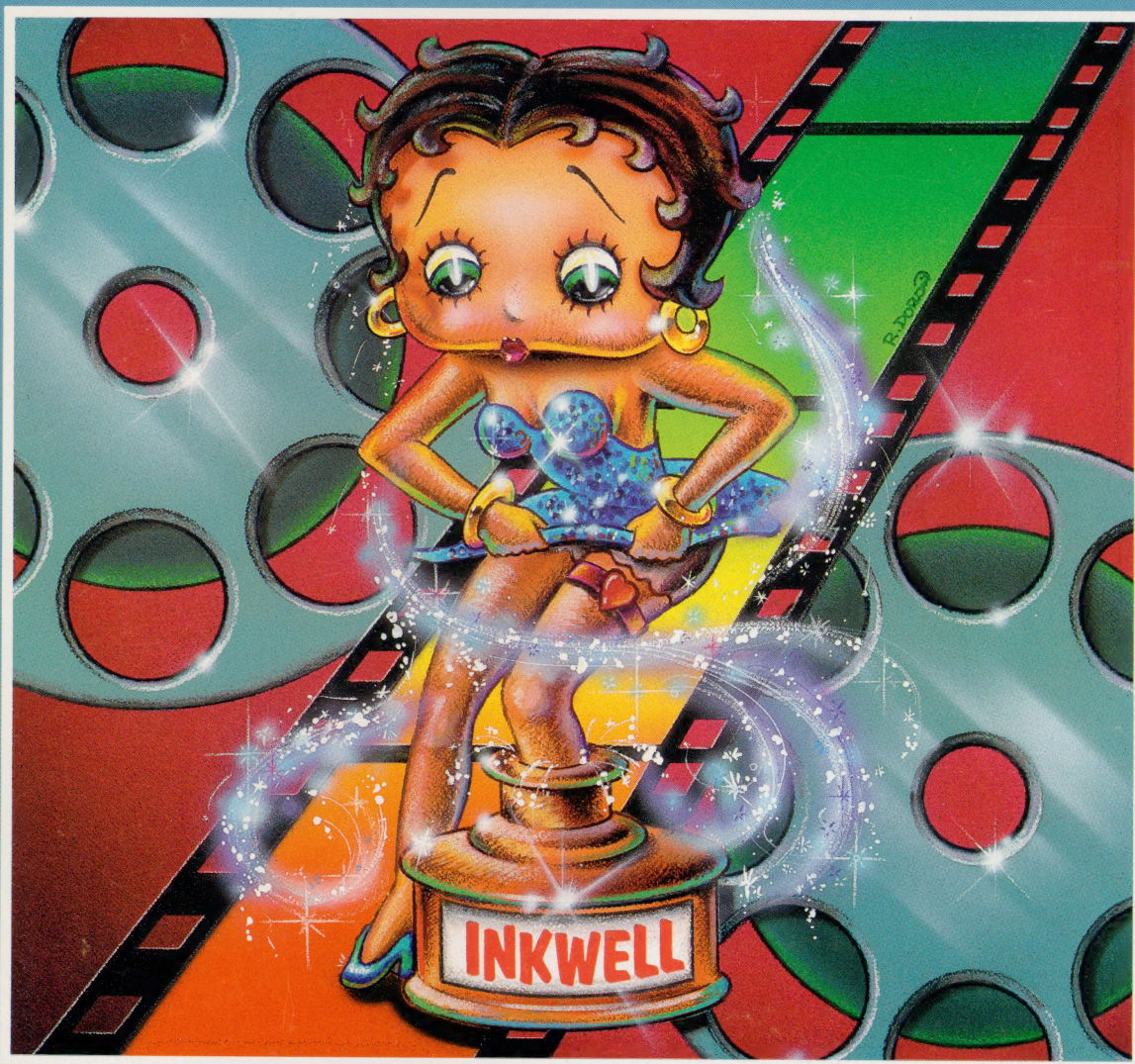


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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

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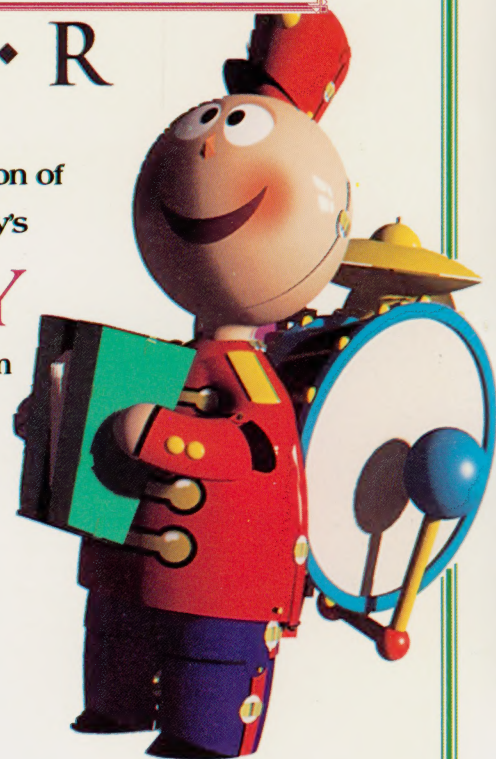
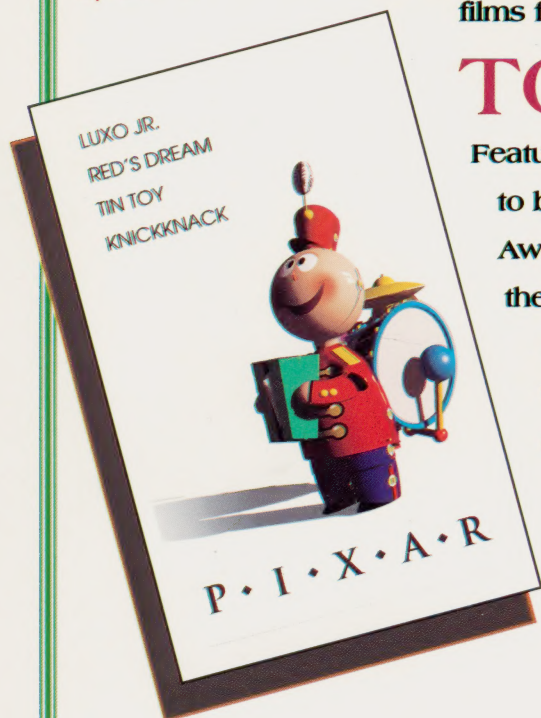
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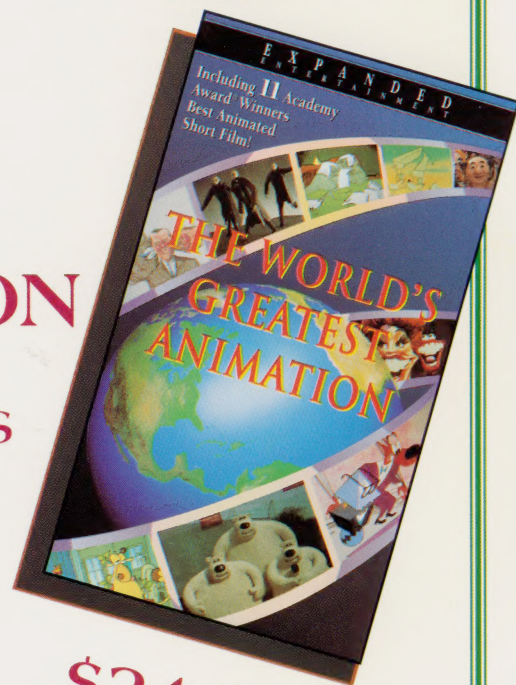


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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

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Fall 1995 Issue 33

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ISSN: 1042-539X

Publisher: Patrick Duquette

Editor and Co-owner: G. Michael Dobbs

Layout: Gene Gumbs

Typesetting, Proofreading and

Mailing Assist: Sheila Boilard and

Mary Cassidy

Front Cover Mechanical produced by Ray Dorow II

Founders: Michael Ventrella and Scott Gillespie

Our Hat's Off to Harry McCracken

Printed by those animated folks at Turley Publishing, Palmer, MA

Special thanks to Howard Green of the Walt Disney Company, Mark Martin, Steve Bissette, Manga Entertainment, Central Park Media, Animeigo, Cathy Hainer of USA Today, Ray Kelly of the (Springfield MA) Union-News, The Museum of Modern Art, Patricia Timberg, Adam Snyder, Linda Simensky, and Bob Miller.

Newsstand/Bookstore Distributors:

Fine Print Distributing

Bernhard DeBoer, Inc.

Ubiquity Distributors

48 States Distributing Co., Inc.

Desert Moon Periodicals

Phil Martin (Vancouver)

Comics Market:

Big Pictures Distribution

Capital City Distributors, Inc.

Diamond Comics Distributors



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Page 63

PUBLISHER TORIAL



In an article about lost Chaplin films for Smithsonian Magazine, (July, 1986) Leonard Maltin described *The Little Tramp's* influence on a "movie crazy nine-year-old."

By the time Leonard was thirteen, he knew he wanted to research and write about film. Most of us aren't lucky enough to know, at any age, what direction our life-boat should be heading. Media influence is usually more subtle than Leonard's epiphany.

Ever wonder what lasting impact the current crop of animation will have three decades from now? I consider myself fortunate to have been born and raised in the village of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts. By anyone's standard, "The Orchard" was a small town, yet two movie houses were within walking distance of our home. (One is still operating.) In addition, a bus ride to Springfield gave you a dizzy choice of twelve first run theaters.

Since we didn't have a television, my earliest exposure to animation was Disney and Warner's theatricals. Sometimes our church would sponsor a three hour Saturday morning all-cartoon festival at the Grand Theater. What a scene! Hundreds of kids cranked up on Mounds Bars and Merry Melodies, rocking in their seats and screaming with delight at the antics of Bugs, Daffy and Porky.

By far, though, the biggest influence on my life was Disney. Consider this: I was eight. Our beagle, Tagalong, recently died of old age. Mom had just come home from the hospital with our new baby brother. I now had two brothers and a sister, yet I was convinced I needed a pig for companionship. My mother gently asked me why I wanted a pig. To me, it seemed like an ideal pet. Only a real pink porker would fill the void.

That same week, my Aunt took me to see *Lady and the Tramp*. It was all too easy to identify with the rats and new born baby segment. Horrified at the possibility of vermin being near my baby brother, I told my Dad I needed a hunting dog. As if verbalizing my fear would make it come true, I didn't tell my parents why I changed my mind.

Even the classic witch in the re-release of *Snow White* was mild in comparison to the slinking, skulking rats. The only other film to



The Grand Theater, Indian Orchard, Massachusetts.
In continuous operation for most of this century, The Grand often ran special Saturday morning cartoon-only shows for local kids.
(Photograph courtesy of the Kamuda Family Archive.)

scare the "bejeebers" out of me was James Whale's *Frankenstein*. (I'll save that anecdote for another column.)

Anyway, my outdoorsman father was only too happy to get another hound for the family. Rocket, the aptly named beagle, was the complete opposite of slow moving, homebody Tagalong. The same week that *Old Yeller* opened at the Burr Theater, Rocket ran away from home. We found him weeks later, sick with distemper. Not hydrophobia, but it seemed like Disney had tapped into my personal supply of Childhood Horror. I won't even go into *Bambi*, the year my Dad had two deer hanging in our back yard.

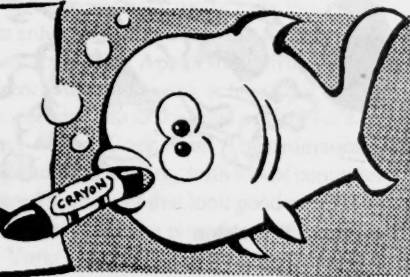
By the time I was twelve, I was completely addicted to anything Disney. The live action was completely real to me, while the animation was safer, make-believe. It was at this time I thought all film should be animated.

The forest fire sequence in *Bambi* convinced me that animation was the greatest art form in the universe and Disney was the Supreme King.

So I'd have to say that Disney had some influence on me. Who will be the heir apparent, influencing the next animation generation? From my vantage point it looks like the Disney/Pixar teamup could actually shape a generation. With *Toy Story*, Pixar defines a new plateau. Just this week someone asked, "could anybody really watch ninety minutes of computer animation?" Shades of 1937, when "experts" predicted moviegoers wouldn't sit for 88 minutes of *Snow White*. Everything old is new again!

Patrick

FAN MAIL FROM SOME FLOUNDER



More Issues!

Frank Baren

United Kingdom

I came in contact with **ANIMATO!** when I did a trade with an animation friend in America and that was the best trade I've ever done, because he sent me 10 back issues of **ANIMATO!** As it states on the cover, it's the Animation Fans Magazine, it took me some weeks to read through all those back issues, but what a fun time I had doing it. I had read many interesting articles and reviews, plus I found out more information in a couple of issues that I had not gotten in years of reading other animation magazines, so I have become a subscriber and a fan again. Keep up the good work and if I've got one complaint, **ANIMATO!** should come out more often.

An Assignment for Harry

Brian Yelverton

Salem, MA

Another great job on Issue #32. The comments on people who complain about cartoons was very accurate. Many groups target a cartoon show because anything on it will be considered aimed directly at young children by the general public. As a result a minor controversy becomes news worthy because children are involved. And if the controversy is silly, that's even better. The networks will mention it as a joke, but they'll also mention the person and/or organization that brought it up. On to happier subjects.

Harry McCracken wanted subjects for his "Curiosity Shop" column. Might I suggest he look further into the *ABC Saturday Superstar Movies Series*. There were a number of EPS' done that have vanished without a trace. One is a show called *Lovecast* (possibly *Luvcast*) *USA*. An animated ripoff of *Love American Style* hosted by a cartoon DJ called Rant n' Rave. As I recall he was real annoying. The show had 3 EPS, one about a teen werewolf featured a song played for the last 3 or 4 minutes. The song had 1 line of words which was repeated over and over. What sticks in my mind most was that even as a kid I knew this was a really bad show. I'd love to see it again, but even reference books

can't find info on this one.

SWAT Kats Addendum

Mark Lungo

Middleburg Heights, OH

I'd like to make some additions and corrections to my *SWAT Kats* article from #32.

First, the corrections. The Hanho Heung-Up studio is located in Korea, not Taiwan. The Ghost Pilot was an enemy air ace from Megawar II, not III. *Mutation City* was based on a story concept by Christian and Yvon Tremblay, but this was not mentioned in the credits of the episode.

Second, a few sentences from the article accidentally had some words omitted when they were printed. Here are the complete sentences.

The Metallikats: "However, Mac and Molly's first priority is 'rubbing out that crud Mayor Manx' because they think he denied their parole."

Razor's Edge: "Saraceni, co-developer and story editor of *2 Stupid Dogs* (among other things), brings a fresh approach to its companion series."

The Deadly Pyramid: "He gives the *SWAT Kats* Cybertron, a plucky, R2D2-like robot who protects the pilots and their friends."

Finally, after the deadline for my article, a new, previously unknown *SWAT Kats* episode was broadcast. Here's my review:

24. THE SWAT KATS: A SPECIAL REPORT

Airdates: May 20/21, 1995

Written and Produced by Nancy Podbielniak

Hanna-Barbera hired an outside producer to make this clips compilation, which was meant to promote the beginning of *SWAT Kats*' second season but didn't air until months after it was completed. The format is a Kat's Eye News "documentary" about the *SWAT Kats*, which is hosted by Ann Gora and consists entirely of re-edited excerpts from the series (taken from every first season episode, plus the first four from the second season). I'm not surprised H-B waited so long to run "A Special Report": it's boring, and it looks like it was made cheaply

and quickly. There are also some omissions and logical errors. Why is *Hard Drive* not mentioned even once? How can Kat's Eye News have footage of the occasions when the Pastmaster has sent the *SWAT Kats* into the past or future? How can a scene from *When Strikes Mutitor* have closeups and shifting camera angles when (according to the narration) it was shot by "a tourist with a home video camera?" I wish I could be more lenient with my grade, because I'm sure that the people who made *A Special Report* did the best they could under difficult circumstances, but the dullness of the final product leaves me no choice. C

Thanks to **ANIMATO!**, to everyone who helped me with the article, and to everyone who read the article.

Kudos to USA Cable

Joseph Guenther

Yardville, NJ

In the "where-are-they-now-file" two packages of fondly remembered Saturday Morning cartoon series from the 1960's and 1970's have been located in of all places, The USA Cable Network (Sundays 7am est).

In a glossy repackaging of The Filimation Superheroes and The Super Friends comes *Superman and Batman Adventures*. Gone are the familiar themes of both series, and in its place a well produced and edited series of panels straight out of a DC Comic Book page. The older Filimation *Superman* is in the first panel complete with clips and sound bites from the Kryptonians series. Then the camera moves to the right to present the Filimation *Batman* in the same fashion with clips of *Batman*, *Robin*, and *Batgirl* accompanied by a voice-over. Then the voice-over announces *The Justice League* starring *Wonder Woman*, *Hawkman*, *Aquaman*, *The Atom* and *Green Lantern* using clips from both Filimation Heroes and *Super Friends*. The

Continued on Page 69



TOON REVIEWS



American Television

Jonny Quest Vs. The Cyber Insects

The Cartoon Network

7:00 p.m. Nov. 19, 1995

Like many people my age (41), I have fond memories of the original *Jonny Quest*. The animated series from the early 1960s was a pioneer in using animation as a medium for adventure, and was the finest production ever to come out of the Hanna-Barbera studios. The success of the shows came about from the concept and characters' design by the late Doug Wildey. He understood that Jonny's role was to be a kid. Jonny was smart and inquisitive. Sometimes he caused trouble, and sometimes he helped his father and Race Bannon solve a mystery.

The show was also a success thanks to its animation. While limited in its scope, the animation was always above the current television standards, and, thanks to clever design work, was sometimes truly effective.

Another aspect of the old show I thought was effective was the somewhat vague job Dr. Quest had and his equally vague relationship with the United States government he obviously enjoyed. The vagueness seemed appropriate from Jonny's point of view. After all, there were many kids when I was growing up who weren't really sure just what their fathers did at work! Why should Jonny be any different? All Jonny (and we) knew is that Dr. Quest was a respected scientist of all disciplines and that he and his government-assigned handyman and bodyguard frequently solved little problems for the boys in Washington.

In the mid-Eighties, Hanna-Barbera revived the Quest show for some new episodes. In the new shows, Race Bannon becomes an adoptive father (although I often suspected there were a couple of little white-haired kids getting support checks in various parts of the globe), and we now have something called the Quest Team reporting directly to a security arm of the government. No vagueness here.

The Cartoon Network is running a new *Jonny Quest* movie in November that is going to be a send-off to the "old" character. The "new" *Jonny Quest* (to be seen next year) will be older, thus opening more potential storylines. In *Jonny Quest vs. the Cyber Insects*, we still have the



"old" Jonny of about 11, but we don't have that "old" spirit.

This Jonny is a somewhat precocious hyperactive mensch who after screwing things up is apt to slouch into a corner and question his abilities and the nature of his existence. I realize the writers were just trying to flesh out a character a bit, but it seems heavy-handed and forced.

The plot revolves around good old Dr. Zinn, now floating around earth in a hidden asteroid and making huge insect warriors whom he will use to conquer the earth. The Quest Team is charged with stopping Zinn. In this high tech world of cloning, space ships, and laser weapons, Hadji's magic seems just a bit passe, and the political correctness of the Quest Team space station community is way too obvious.

From my perspective as an animation geezer, *Jonny Quest vs. the Cyber Insects* just didn't quite cut the mustard. Younger viewers, who aren't tainted with old memories and different expectations, might enjoy it, though. **GMD**

Foreign Animation

Asterix Conquers America

Director Gerhard Hahn, 84 minutes

The six previous European *Asterix* cartoons, like their *Tintin* counterparts, were a mixed bunch. Two were unwatchable (*Asterix the Gaul*, *Asterix and Cleopatra*), two reasonably fun (*Operation Getafix*, *The Twelve Tasks of Asterix*) and two pretty good (*Asterix Vs. Caesar*, *Asterix in Britain*). Unfortunately, this latest effort is a backward step: not unwatchable, quite, but perilously close.

Story - Asterix and Obelix are chasing after their druid Getafix, who has got himself captured by the Romans. Said Romans decide the best way to deal with a druid is throw him over the world's edge (Flat Earthers, you see, providing the film with its one good gag). Asterix and Obelix follow to discover the New World: cue swipes at turkeys, totem poles and Indian stereotypes. The problem is none of this is remotely funny. Goscinny and Uderzo's comic-strip humour is hard to put on screen at the best of times: here it feels flat and dreary.

For the record, Asterix is voiced by Craig

Charles, star of the cult sci-fi comedy *Red Dwarf*. Unfortunately, his regional accent is totally wrong for an Ancient Gaul (his singing is an even bigger mistake). The rest of the cast, involving several Brit "household names," is similarly misplaced. The drawings capture the look of the strip but none of its many static charms.

What can I say to recommend this film? Er, the opening sequence is good and there's a nice seastorm. That's about it.....**Andrew Osmond**

On Video

Casper the Friendly Ghost

Amblin/Universal: 100 Minutes

I suppose the fact I've never seen a *Casper* short qualifies me to write about the movie. After all, the sign of a good spin-off isn't so much whether it's true to the original - though that can help - but whether it pulls in an audience who aren't AWARE it's a spin-off. On that level, *Casper* succeeds, to a point.

Story: *Casper's* gothic mansion is inherited by hideous harridan Carrington Critternden (Cathy Moriarty) who has reason to believe there's gold hidden somewhere in her house. After failing to remove the spectral inmates with demolition men and Dan Ackroyd, Critternden enlists the help of an eccentric "ghost therapist" (Bill Pullman) and his teenage daughter (Christina Ricci). This is exactly what *Casper* planned - apparently he's capable of hormones when it comes to the opposite sex - and the rest of the film centres on Ricci's relationship with her fellow lonely spirit.

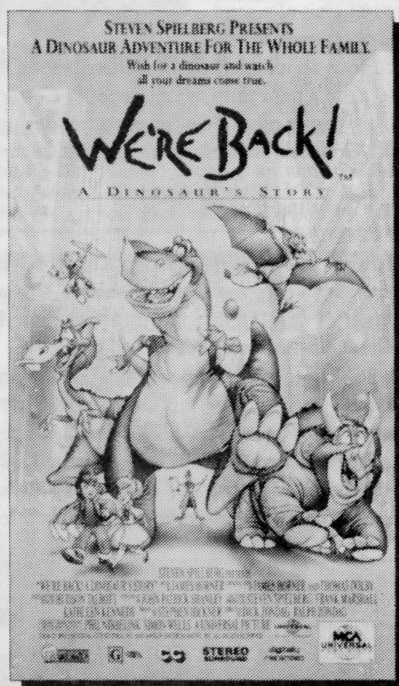
Casper has been marketed as the next step up from *Roger Rabbit* in terms of SFX, but I'm afraid I don't buy it. Yes, the ghosts are on screen for the bulk of the film, and yes, they're very well animated, but somehow the film lacks the buzz that *Roger*, with its ensemble of over 50 toon favourites, achieved. Maybe it's because *Casper's* animated sprites, despite sterling efforts to give them distinct characters, end up looking and feeling so similar. It limits you when your stars are built on a simpler design than Mickey Mouse.

Alternatively, perhaps it's because the sheer number of effects reduces the film's "wow" factor. *Casper* is a perfectly likable character, but you quickly forget to be awed when he comes on screen. A few less appearances, or some more striking ones, might have helped matters - as it is, it's a case of effects overkill. (For the record, the most memorable moment is when Casper's ghostly chums morph Pullman into Rodney Dangerfield, Clint Eastwood and Robert DeNiro - three star cameos for the price of one.)

Apart from the effects, the film never rises above competent. Admittedly, it's one of the few family pictures that dares tackle the subject of bereavement - albeit in sanitised "Ghost"

fashion - and there's some genuine pathos in Casper's Peter Pan-like plight. Unfortunately, this is undercut by bad pantomime-style humour - especially from Moriarty's obnoxious sidekick Eric Idle - and a script that clearly had too many rewrites. Supporting characters like Ricci's father and classmates don't have enough to do, while the silly climax suggests the makers ran out of ideas, with characters arbitrarily swapping between "live" and "dead." The visual and verbal gags fall into the "slick but forgettable" category. Methinks *Casper* should have dispensed with the jokes altogether and just gone for the schmaltz.

Perhaps the biggest irony is the casting of Christina Ricci, the splendidly psychotic Wednesday in the two *Adams Family* films, as *Casper's* wholesome heroine. While she's good in the part, it underlines the fact that Hollywood family films are separating into two extreme camps. These days they're either gratuitously unpleasant (e.g. *Problem Child*, *Adams Family*) or gratuitously nice (e.g. all the rest). We need some middle ground. **Andrew Osmond**



WE'RE BACK - A DINOSAUR'S TALE Amblin, 67 minutes

It's here at last! I don't know how well *We're Back* was distributed in America, but over here in Britain it was starting to feel like another *Thief and the Cobbler*. First the film was trailed in theatres for summer '94; then there was a flurry of promotional cinema posters round Christmastime and finally it was announced it was skipping the cinema circuit altogether. Which, to judge by this straight-to-video release, was a pity.

We're Back, you see, is actually rather

good - certainly a lot better than most of the sub-Disney junk reaching the theatres. OK, the story isn't up to much: four dinos have their brainpower enhanced by a benevolent time traveller, journey to the Big Apple and befriend lonely children. But behind the schmaltz it's well-made, certainly up to the level of Amblin's last feature, *Fievel Goes West*. The animation is glossy and solid looking, with lots of computer-enhanced sequences that look good even on the small screen. (Dig the pterodactyl-eye view of New York!) The cityscapes alone put *Oliver and Company* to shame, while the detail will have video-junkies reaching for the freeze-frame. Like *Fievel*, the film shuns Bluth-type simpering in favour of gag-filled set-pieces, a wise exchange.

The celebrity voices are fine - John Goodman making up for the dreadful *Flinstones* - and the film's 67 minutes speed by. So forget your anti-Spielberg sentiments and give *We're Back* a whirl. **Andrew Osmond**

Guyver: The Dark Hero

The anime series featuring the adventures of a school boy who happens upon a strange living weapon, the Guyver, which merges with his body to create an almost invulnerable warrior is very popular among animation fans, and has been the source material for now two live-action films.

The first Guyver film took the deadly serious anime (known for its frequent gore and truly hideous monsters) and lightened it up for American audiences. There is such a disparity between the tone of the anime and the first movie, that viewers interested in seeing the anime based on the first live action film should be warned to expect something quite different.

Wang sticks much closer to the tone and theme of the original anime in this sequel. Like the animated series, the young man who is merged with the Guyver is far from happy with his fate, and seeks out those who might have answers. In this film, he joins an archaeological expedition which has discovered a cave with paintings on its walls similar to those he sees in his nightmares. Slowly he and the audiences understands the origin of the Guyver and the evil Zoanoids who want to possess the weapon.

Wang does a spectacular job on a low-budget. The monster and Guyver suits are first-rate, and the fight scenes are staged with the imagination often found in Hong Kong productions. Handsomely photographed, the film takes full advantage of its outdoor setting. The script has some clichéd dialogue, but the narrative moves a steady pace. There are effective performances from the largely unknown cast.

My only real criticism of the film is that for audiences who are not familiar with the anime or the first live-action film, they might be a little confused about just what is happening. This

film dovetails into the first film so closely that watching the first film may not be a bad idea. **GMD**

Merchandise

Comic Book #1

Spumco/Marvel - \$6.95

Hey kids! If you're looking for a comic book that will shock your parents, teachers and Rachel Carson - this is it! The \$6.95 cover price alone will make your father's eyes widen and bulge. (Now you know why he's called "Pop"!)

Mom will gasp at the content and re-evaluate her sacrifices for your college fund.

Jim Smith and John Kricfalusi have crafted a comic book seemingly aimed at pre-pubescent boys and Spumco True Believers.

In a bold move, Spumco has rejected a conventional size comic for the jumbo-mega-bigger-is-better format. (9x12) Unfortunately, they should have also opted for saddle-stitched instead of perfect bound glue binding. Turning the pages causes the newsprint paper to crinkle and bunch in the center of the book. Very annoying. Interior color is heavy, solid and dark.

If I was a twelve-year-old and back in Catholic school, I'd be smuggling this puppy into class and allowing Sister Mary Magenta to "discover" it! Offensive or shocking material is always more desirable, interesting and funny with nuns condemning it to hell!

Comic Book suffers a bit from slow pacing. Jimmy, the Hapless Boy, seems to be a character waiting for stupidity and the story to overtake him. Storyboard roots are definitely showing through. Relating some of the story's highlights sound funnier than they actually read. Gird your loins—here's a quick summary:

During an all-day round as a Turtle Food Collector, Jimmy, the Idiot Boy, gets into an absurdly funny boxing match with a tough beetle. Egged on by the infamous George Liquor, Jimmy and the bug duke it out until a victor emerges.

Coaxed into fiendish George Liquor's house, Jimmy accidentally swallows a mouthful of dead insects and has his eyeball dry out while trying to attract silverfish to his exposed orb. Plenty of extreme eyeball close ups, innuendo and cult catch phrases to satisfy the most demanding John K. fan.

In a questionable sequence, Jimmy rips a baby bug from the arms of a mother ladybug. (After all, he is a dedicated T.F.C.) The distraught mother commits suicide by shooting a large bullet through her head. (Hilarious?)

In one truly disgusting scene, a bloated female silverfish expels her larvae into Jimmy's bug collection sack, filling it to overflowing. Rear view included.

Completing a successful day as a Turtle Food Collector, Jimmy stumbles into a Twilight

Zone ending.

The last page of *Comic Book* is titled *Grossology* and includes a segment called *The Fart Part 1: The Biology of Farting*. Sylvia Carol presents an accurate description of the cause and effects of flatulation.

John K. and the Spumco staff should be commended for testing the comic marketplace.

Most people underestimate the amount of work that goes into producing and distributing a comic book. The comics market is a glutted, unforgiving, ruthless, and sometimes rewarding environment to make a living.

My personal feeling is this comic book would make an outrageous animated cartoon worthy of the "Sick and Twisted" circuit. I suspect John Kricfalusi is having a bit of a send up at our expense. While I'm curious about the next three installments. I would have a hard time recommending *Comic Book* to anyone other than Spumco Junkies or Marvel Collector Zombies. **Patrick Duquette**

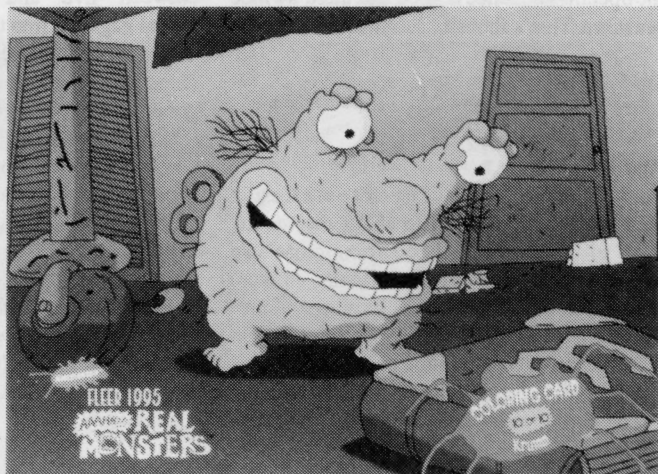
Popeye Trading Cards Card Creations

I own precious few card sets, but the Popeye trading cards are the first set since Drew Freidman's Toxic High School that has inspired me to make sure I collected them all.

Unlike the Betty Boop set reviewed in the last issue of *ANIMATO!*, this set was obviously prepared by people who had a love of the material and a knowledge of what Popeye fans would like to see. The set covers Popeye's career in the comic pages, animation and comic

books with obvious affection and care. There are several minor errors, (some of the cards featuring model sheets from the Fleischer Popeye cartoons are mis-identified as being from the Famous Studio), but that is the nit I found I could pick with this superb set.

If you love Popeye, you must own this set! **GMD**



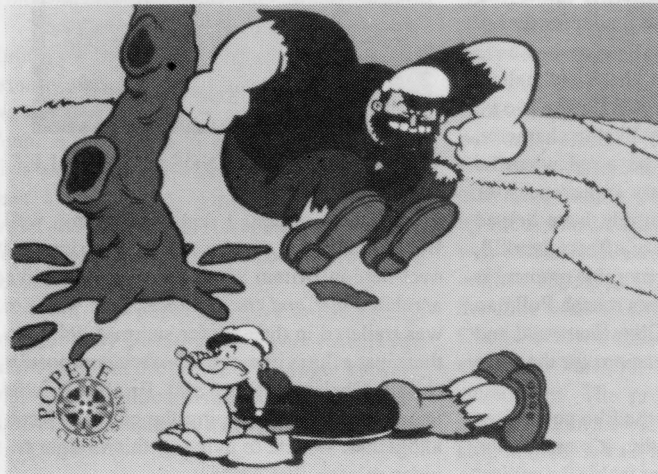
AAAAH!!!! Real Monsters Trading Cards Fleer

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Animation Art: The Early Years 1911-1953; A Visual Reference for Collectors Jeff Lotman, Schiffer, \$125.00

This opulent coffee table book is designed as an introduction to animation art collecting, a primer to American animation history, and as a price guide. While the book has much to offer in its incredible collection of images from animated films, it seems to be overwhelmed at times with the enormity of its mission.

Animation art collector Jeff Lotman has indeed put together an astonishing number of production art in the book's 400-plus pages.



Continued on Page 69

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MGM Animator Irv Spence Dies

Dallas, TX...Devotees of MGM animation will be saddened to learn of the death of veteran animator, Irv Spence.

For students of MGM animation, the name Irv Spence beams like a spotlight above the credits. Originally hired by Schlesinger Studios in 1936 as a protégé of Ub Iwerks, Spence obtained his position as animator at MGM under Harman & Ising a year later, when Iwerks suggested that Spence's abilities deserved greener pastures. Spence worked on most of the early Harman-Ising films, including one of their finest, the 1939 anti-war film, *Peace on Earth*. In 1940, Spence was assigned to recently formed Hanna-Barbera unit, where he began animating a newly developed pantomime cat and mouse team named Tom and Jerry, whose adventures garnered the animation department a whopping 7 Academy Awards before they ended in 1956.

In 1942 when Gene Kelly incorporated animation into his musicals, Ed Barge, Ken Muse, and Irv Spence undertook the task of animating *Jerry the Mouse*, matching steps with the dancer in *Anchors Aweigh*. Contemporary film critics hailed the sequence as the most masterful blend of live action and animation ever undertaken. Spence repeated this success a short time later, when Esther Williams performed a graceful water ballet with Tom and Jerry in *Dangerous When Wet*, and again with Kelly in, *Invitation to the Dance* with animated ancient Persian characters designed by Gene Hazelton. Animation circles have often speculated that *Song of the South* was produced solely as Disney's answer to the live-action and animation specialty work that MGM clearly dominated during the 1940's. In a 1990 interview, Spence commented, "I was pleased to find out that Walt had his animators secretly watching our Tom and Jerry's. It was supposed to be a big secret, and they weren't supposed to let anybody know." With the death of studio animation, Spence made the move to television, and worked with Hanna-Barbera on animated programs such as *Ruff 'n Reddy*, *Huckleberry Hound*, *The Flintstones*, *Top Cat*, and *The Jetsons*.

Irv Spence retired in 1976, but remained on call with HB for special projects. Spence received an "Annie" award, the "Oscar" of the animation industry, as well as being highly

profiled in several recent volumes on MGM and Hanna-Barbera animation. His last film work was directing a brief sequence in *The Jetsons* feature film in 1990.

John Province

Central Park Media Expands

New York City, NY...People looking for more evidence that interest in anime is quickly growing in this country need look no further than the New York City offices of Central Park Media. The headquarters of one of the largest anime distributors have more than doubled which is a indication of the expansions planned by the company.

Central Park Media will be opening up a division to sell both American and Japanese animation art, is planning more theatrical releases of anime, and is going into the production side of the industry, according to Steven Yacht, the director of business affairs for Central Park Media, in an interview for *ANIMATO!*

Yacht revealed the company's first co-production will be an entry in the *MD Geist* series and should be on sale in the beginning months of 1996. The move towards co-production with a Japanese firm seemed to be a logical step for the company, according to Yacht.

And even more logical is the move towards the sale of animation art. An average anime production can yield 8,000 to 10,000 cels suitable for sale, said Yacht. CPM's recent purchase of an animation art business will give them a variety of artwork to offer customers.

CPM has been successful in selling cable broadcast rights of several of its anime series to the SCI-FI network and anticipates doing more with the cable company.

While Yacht notes the competition from other anime distributors have meant a livier bidding process to secure the rights to Japanese productions, he believes the competition is good for the industry.

"We benefit from competition," he explained. "The competition is raising the consciousness of the entire genre." GMD

J.A.I.L.E.D. Busts Dealer and Takes Possession of 10,000 Illegal Videos

New York City, NY...The seizure of more than 10,000 pirated anime tapes from a New

York City store this summer proved to be an auspicious start for J.A.I.L.E.D. (Japanese Animation Industry Legal Enforcement Division). The Karate Center was selling counterfeit titles of licensed and copyrighted anime such as *Ninja Scroll*, *Fatal Fury*, and *Heroic Legend of Arslan*, among others. The videos were in clamshell boxes with photocopies of the legitimate box covers. Leslie Hyman, the spokesperson for J.A.I.L.E.D., said "The New York seizure sent a clear message to dealers who in the past had ignored copyright infringement laws."

The formation of a new industry trade group to combat piracy of Japanese animation, though, has confused and worried many anime fans. As many readers of *ANIMATO!* know, the backbone of anime fandom in this country have been dedicated scholars and fans who've translated and produced their own anime tapes and distributed at no cost from fan to fan. In an interview with *ANIMATO!*, Hyman made it clear the industry group is not interested in going after fans.

"We recognize the people who started this industry," explained Hyman who added that all the companies involved with J.A.I.L.E.D. understand the dedication and intensity of serious anime fans.

"We want to protect the products. We're not out to get the fans," she emphasized.

The Motion Pictures Producers Association (the tradegroup for American movie industry) has been very active to trying to stop the efforts of pirates who do everything from illegally dubbing of copyrighted videos to stealing workprints and copies of master tapes out of editing suites. Any *ANIMATO!* reader who has been to a comic book or film convention knows the prevalency of illegal videos.

The J.A.I.L.E.D. companies knew that the MPPA could not represent their interests and formed their own group in order to curb organized piracy. The group hopes anime fans understand that piracy can weaken the industry and will help them out by tipping them off to pirate operations. The J.A.I.L.E.D. hotline to report piracy is 1-800-917-9799. GMD

TV Toon Titans

The hallowed halls that house man's first steps on the moon and the interviews of Edward

R. Murrow, are now also the new home of Bedrock and Jellystone Park. New York City's Museum of Television and Radio is playing host to *The World of Hanna Barbera*, a tribute to the work of William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, two men who have monopolized Saturday morning television for over two decades.

The retrospective, which began this past June, will run through November 17. The main highlight of *The World of Hanna Barbera* are daily screenings, featuring some of the studio's finest moments. The first screenings were of Hanna Barbera's most popular show, *The Flintstones* and subsequent screenings ranged from the popular, (*Scooby-Doo*, *Yogi Bear* and *The Jetsons*) to the seldom seen, (*Ricochet Rabbit*, *Peter Potamus* and *Ruff and Reddy*), to the offbeat, (*Penelope Pitstop*, *Josie and the Pussycats* and *The Banana Splits* - man, talk about your sixties flashback!).

Another wonderful addition to *The World of Hanna Barbera* was a gallery exhibit, (that unfortunately only ran through September 25). Housed in the Museum's *Steven Spielberg Gallery*, it included not only wonderful samples of original animation art, such as cels, storyboards and title cards, but also such rare works as early conceptual drawings for *Top Cat* and the "Presentation Board" for *Johnny Quest*, which the studio used to pitch the show to network execs.

The exhibit also included the Hanna Barbera of today and tomorrow, with art work from the Cartoon Network's *World Premiere Toons* and the forthcoming, *New Adventures of Johnny Quest*.

It also served as great background for the men behind it all. Both William Hanna and Joseph Barbera began their careers at the MGM Studio, providing audiences with some of Tom and Jerry's finest moments. When the studio closed its animation department, Hanna and Barbera saw television as fertile ground to employ all they had learned at MGM. The technique "limited animation," which the UPA studio had initiated for artistic reasons, was used by the H/B Studios as a way to save money and meet television's belt-tightening budgets. What the shows lacked in fluidity, they made up for in characters that were not only graphically appealing, but also had real personalities.

With work on display spanning over three decades, *The World of Hanna Barbera* was also a testament to how long the studio has endured and the impact Hanna Barbera has had not only on the animation industry, but on our popular culture itself. Because of this, the TV toons seemed right at home in the Museum's hallowed halls. **Mike Lyons**

Space Ghost Spinoffs

Inspired by the success of *Space Ghost Coast to Coast*, the Cartoon Network and sister

station TBS have launched a pair of related series.

Space Ghost himself is on hand as host of TBS' *Cartoon Planet*. While essentially a repackaging of old cartoons of varying quality from the Turner library, new linking segments from the *Coast to Coast* crew spice up the proceedings.

Joining Space Ghost, as always, is evil mantis/locust/bandleader Zorak. However, Moltar, the other *Coast to Coast* baddie, is nowhere to be found on the new series. His replacement is Brac, a former member of the Council of Doom who became a star in his own right warbling "The Twelve Days of Christmas" on the *Coast to Coast* Christmas special.

Music is an important element of *Cartoon Planet*. Each episode features an animated music video, either culled from a classic cartoon, or a new one featuring the Space Ghost crew. The Ghost himself has contributed a short Gilbert and Sullivan-type operetta, while Brac's tendency towards free association lends itself perfectly to an incomprehensible Bob Dylan tribute. The show's catchy theme is provided by They Might Be Giants.

In a recent *Coast to Coast* episode, Space Ghost complained about noise coming from "that new *Birdman* set." Apparently, the Cartoon Network is, in fact, currently working on a new talk show starring the former archeologist/winged secret agent to run in the Friday 11:15 - 11:30 PM EST slot as a companion to *Coast to Coast*.

The project is still in the early stages of development, and it is not yet known if sidekicks Birdboy, Falcon 7 and Avenger the eagle are scheduled to appear. **Judith Reboy**

Barker Gallery to Open Museum

Cheshire, CT...Barker Animation Art Gallery located in Cheshire, CT, will feature a new Cartoon, Character, and Comic Museum on the grounds of the gallery. The museum is slated to open in September, and will feature hundreds of collectibles toys and cartoon and comic book and strip memorabilia. The museum will be open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 4:00 p.m. For more information, call the gallery at (860) 272-CELS.

Ireland and Dorn to Make Guest Appearances on *Marvel Action Universe*

Los Angeles, CA...Supermodel Kathy Ireland and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Michale Dorn will be lending their voices as "Crystal" and "Gorgan" respectively, two of the "Inhuman" characters in the *Fantastic Four* segment of the syndicated *Marvel Action Universe*. The show will debut on Sept. 24 with new segments of *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man* and *Biker Mice from Mars*.

Superman on the WB Network

Los Angeles, CA...Superman will be the subject of an all-new animated show produced by Warner brothers Animation for the WB Television Network's children programming service, Kid's WB! The show will debut in September 1996.

MCA/Universal Home Video Releases

Los Angeles, CA...MCA/Universal Home Video has announced the following fall animated releases:

Problem Child - The Animated Series: four cassettes with two cartoons on each tape will retail for a suggested price of \$12.98.

We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story: the 1993 theatrical feature is being re-released on video at the new price of \$14.98.

The Christmas Witch: An installment of Shelly Duvall's Bedtime stories features a story of a witch-in-training who discovers the true meaning of Christmas. The suggested price is \$12.98.

Adler and Co to Open New Gallery

Linwood, NJ...Adler and Co. has announced the opening of a new gallery at 210 New Road, Suite #5 in Linwood, NJ. For more details call 1-800-647-8007.

Atomix Creates Computer Rain for *Judge Dredd*

Hollywood, CA—Computer graphics boutique Atomix (formerly Topix) recently provided 25 computer-generated shots for the feature film *Judge Dredd*, starring Sylvester Stallone. For the scene in which Stallone hung precariously off the Statue of Liberty, Atomix created computer-generated rain. Animator Peter Blinn wrote a rain-drop generator program for speed and flexibility; the raindrops were then created in Wavefront and ported to Prisms for rendering.

Computer-generated rain gave total creative control to *Judge Dredd* director Danny Cannon and avoided soaking cameras and set with practical rain. Blinn's C program generated the thousands of raindrops in Wavefront and allowed the angle and intensity to be manipulated to the director's satisfaction.

In a second scene, Atomix created CGI reflections in a plate glass window, adding realism to the scene.

Cartoon Network Juices Up its Morning Line-Up With *Carrot Top's A.M. Madness*

Atlanta, GA...Cartoon Network has signed Carrot Top, winner of the 1994 American Comedy Award for best male stand-up, as host of a new morning show, *Carrot Top's A.M. Mayhem*, debuting Monday, Oct. 9, from 7-9 a.m. (ET). Marking the first time a real-life

Continued on Page 69

YOUNG READERS' PAGE!

CAFFEINE CAT & DETECTIVE DOG



Kyle Carrozza
Catskill, New York

Kyle sent us a drawing of his current project (left) "How The West Was Dumb". Also this neat sketch (right).



Ainsley
Tacoma, Washington

Ainsley shares her characters with us. (right) Think mink!



Katie Nicholls
Fairview Park, Ohio

Katie loves voice actors and Rob Paulsen is her favorite. Check out her drawings. (below)





Cathryn
a.k.a. DucPigeon @ AOL.COM

Cathryn has a large portfolio of her favorite animated characters. Here's two sketches of the most famous. (above)

Stephanie McFarland
Olney, Maryland

Stephanie checks in with a seasonal pair of her own stylish characters. (below)



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ANIMATION PRESERVATION

Betty Boop Rides Again!

Los Angeles showing of classic Boop cartoon nets \$15,000.00, but your help is still needed to save classic animation

by Jere Guldin

Animation preservation made the news in a big way recently, when Betty Boop became the official representative of ASIFA-Hollywood's "Adopt a Cartoon" program at a gala fund raiser held in Los Angeles on August 7. Betty was featured in all publicity for the event, which received full media coverage and netted nearly fifteen thousand dollars for the preservation of cartoons.

It all began months ago, when a representative from King Features Syndicate approached ASIFA-Hollywood, the Los Angeles chapter of the international animation society, ASIFA, about the possibility of an event being organized around Betty Boop's 65th anniversary that would benefit film preservation. After some discussion, King Features committed to sponsoring the entire event, which was held at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences theater. The evening also served to launch the Los Angeles opening of *Betty Boop Confidential*, an eleven cartoon Fleischer program circulating nationwide through Kit Parker Films, which provided the prints gratis for the show.

To make the evening special, it was decided that presentations made by guests would take place prior to the screening. Hosting the event was Leonard Maltin, who introduced Max Fleischer's son, director Richard Fleischer (*Narrow Margin*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *The Vikings*, *Fantastic Voyage*), who spoke about his father's career. There was even a "live" Betty on hand (as well as a Koko), arriving outside the theater in a limousine accompanied by a pair of body builders, who sang a few songs to the crowds before taking her seat inside. Additionally, a demonstration of nitrate decomposition and film preservation techniques was given, the latter focusing on the restoration of the first color Fleischer cartoon, *Poor Cinderella*.

The evening was a success, largely due to the immense amount of publicity generated for the show by King Features. Major articles

appeared in several Los Angeles newspapers prior to the event, along with one in the national paper, "USA Today," which brought on the best response of all. The audience enjoyed the program, and house receipts, mailed-in contributions, plus pledges of five thousand dollars each from Richard Fleischer for Fleischer

the *Inkwell* silent shorts, or only ten black-and-white *Talkartoons*, or just three *Color Classic* subjects. A two-reel Technicolor Fleischer cartoon, like *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy*, would cost ten thousand dollars on its own, while a feature such as *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* would spiral into the fifty-thousand dollar range.

Although the money will help only a few cartoons, it is hoped that the publicity generated by King Features and the event will continue to keep animation preservation in the eye and mind of the public. There is more support for preservation from the private sector now than ever before, which is increasingly important as government funding dwindles. Fleischer cartoons have been given additional help recently from Le Gimate del Cinema Muto, a silent film festival held annually in Pordenone, Italy, which is funding the preservation of numerous silent Fleischer films at various archives in the United States and abroad in order to acquire the films for its October retrospective, while ANIMATO! friends and contributors Jerry Beck and Will Ryan have funded the preservation of *Koko's EarthControl*, probably the best of all the *Inkwell Imps* subjects which, surprisingly, never had been preserved until now.

But for every success story, there is something that falls through the cracks. The Technicolor negative to Fleischer's *A Cartoon Travesty of The Raven* is steadily decomposing, and is otherwise unavailable in 35mm prints. Some of the later Betty Boop cartoons, such as *Buzzy Boop at the Concert*, and several of the Fleischer *Screen Songs*, are thought not to exist in 35mm at all any longer. Events such as this are just one step among many that must be taken to ensure that all animated films in existence today remain so for the future.



A classic Betty pose from the card Max Fleischer would sign for visitors to his studio. (© Fleischer Studio, Inc/ King Features Syndicate)

Studios, and Robert Sigman of Republic Pictures, brought the total receipts nearly to fifteen thousand.

As successful an evening as it was on so many levels, including monetarily, the funds raised from it unfortunately won't go very far. Broken down into individual cartoons, fifteen thousand dollars is enough to save fifteen *Out of*

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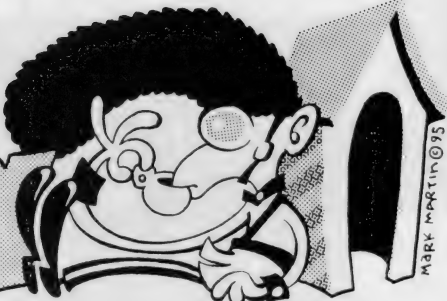
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Tons of Teatime



by Andrew Osmond

Our British correspondent remembers two classic TV animations you may come across on cable or video

By Andrew Osmond

Last issue, I talked about two Brit cartoons that attempted to sell themselves as mainstream adult features, failing dismally. The conclusion, it seemed, was that Britons, like Americans, didn't buy the idea of "grown-up" cartoons. That sounds depressing, but it's worth remembering another side of the coin. We Brits may have trouble accepting that cartoons can be "adult," but we still have a hell of a lot of respect for so-called kid's stuff.

After all, just think of British literature. Many of the literary establishment's most treasured classics are books written (at least nominally) for children - *Alice*, *Peter Pan*, *Narnia* and so forth. When Disney mutilated the first two in the Fifties, the British critics rose up in arms to condemn American cultural "contamination." Today, every British snob routinely refers to "trashy imported cartoons" as proof of our island's cultural decadence.

The two animations I want to look at were part of the inevitable backlash - British-made adaptations of well-known British children's classics, with up-front British talent. The first is the BBC's 1984 dramatisation of John Masefield's *The Box of Delights*, which now plays on American PBS stations. This six-part fantasy, an ingenious mixture of animation and live-action, was one of the first to be independently produced for the Children's Department of the BBC, setting a standard that proved hard to match.

The opening credits set the tone perfectly: a series of surreal images ranging from Punch to Heme the Hunter, overlaid on a snow-filled background to the accompaniment of a haunting *First Nowell*. Devin Stanfield plays young Kay Harker, a schoolboy on his way home for the Christmas holidays. On the journey, he encounters an eccentric Punch and Judy man

who is being pursued by some very powerful enemies. The oldster lends the boy a keepsake: a small wooden box that once belonged to a legendary medieval philosopher. As one might expect, it is no normal box, but a gateway to other times and places. Meanwhile, trouble is afoot in Kay's home town: clergy and townsfolk are vanishing and the heart of the mystery seems to lie with the malevolent Abner Brown.

What interest does Abner have in the box? Who is the Punch and Judy man and how did he come to possess such an extraordinary device? As the kidnaps mount up, Kay determines to solve these mysteries. His search for the box's secrets brings him into contact with new friends - and enemies. This Christmas, the wolves are running...

The Box of Delights was made for £1 million: peanuts by the standards of US Telefantasy, but an immense sum for the BBC (double that of an average adult drama). Live-action location filming took place as far afield as Scotland and the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, with a Merchant Ivory-level attention to period detail. The performances were equally classy, with the late Patrick Troughton, arguably the best Doctor Who, superbly cast as the Box's enigmatic owner. The villainous Abner was played by Robert Stevens (previously Aragorn in an acclaimed thirteen-hour version of *Lord of the Rings* on BBC Radio), projecting a wonderful sense of manic evil. Special credit should go to newcomer Stanfield, who had none of the grating self-consciousness of many young actors.

But what of the animation, I hear you cry? In my view, *Box of Delights* contains some of the most magical cartoon sequences ever filmed. Early on, Troughton hints at what is to come when he summons a "real" phoenix from a hearthfire: later the same episode he escapes Abner by animating a painting and hiding in it.

Further installments show Kay visiting Heme to learn the secrets of the wild wood, where he becomes an animated stag (a bit like the Merlin/Arthur scenes in Disney's *Sword of the Stone*, but played straight). By the climax, the visual pyrotechnics include fiery demons straight out of *Dante's Inferno*.

But it's not just the quality of the effects that sets *Box* apart from other fantasy series. Director Paul Stone maintains a skillful contrast between the joyous excitement of the Christmas season and the darker wonders of Kay's quest. The story is excellently told, with none of the clumsiness or padding which marred Masefield's original: it manages to keep the sheer strangeness of his ideas (everything from man-sized rats to silent aeroplanes) without ever sliding into farce or silliness.

Box's critical and ratings success predictably led to follow-ups, most ambitiously an eighteen-part stab at C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* between 1988 and 1991 (now available on US video). Unfortunately, the BBC production suffered from a stodgy, over-literal script and variable production values - one episode saw a beautifully computer-rendered centaur rubbing shoulders with a midget in a second-hand animal suit. More interesting was a 1995 version of Alan Garner's *Elidor*, where the title *Fantasy World* was filmed in computer-filtered monochrome and populated with assorted geometric menaces.

The second animation I want to focus on, however, is Cosgrove-Hall's *The BFG*, a 100% 90-minute cartoon premiered on Christmas Day 1990. The story, based on Roald Dahl's bestseller, is refreshingly straightforward. An orphan called Sophie is snatched away to a magic world by a giant figure who calls himself

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Annecy Animation Festival

Zut Alors! The annual animation festival in France receives a mixed review

by Adam Snyder

It wasn't until the final Sunday evening that the tension turned into outright rebellion in a scene more reminiscent of a grammar school political convention than the awards ceremony at the oldest, most prestigious animation festival in the world.

Ironically, animation professionals had every reason to expect a banner year from the Annecy International Animation Festival, held bi-annually since 1960 a stone's throw from Lac d'Annecy in the shadow of the French Alps. Animation worldwide has never been hotter, as evidenced by the three hundred films that had been selected from 1236 submissions to be viewed by 4500 attendees — all festival records. What could go wrong during six days of watching cartoons, drinking French wine, and strolling through the "Venice of the Alps"?

Plenty, according to Festival veterans. The problems began last winter when animators, whose work had been selected, had trouble getting travel and schedule information. "We were kept totally in the dark — they didn't even acknowledge my application," says Paul Fierlinger, whose 55-minute animated feature, "*Drawn From Memory*," won Annecy's Special Television Prize and will air Halloween night on PBS.

Things didn't get much better once the six-day Festival began on May 30. "They found every possible way to insult the animators," says Ron Diamond, who runs Acme Filmworks which employs independent animators on commercial projects. "They were ignored, made to feel they weren't in the least important. It wasn't so much anti-American as pro-Franco."

Many people also questioned the jury process, particularly the selection of the Grand Prize winner, the 9-minute Russian film, *Switchcraft*, which was widely considered to be derivative of the work of the Canadian animator Paul Driessen. But the biggest problem, most attendees agree, was that too many films overtaxed the Festival's limited resources. They also overtaxed many attendees. Watching film after film stronger in visual pyrotechnics than in traditional narrative made one year to be told a story, any story, with an old-fashioned beginning, middle and end. Thankfully, the best films, by some of the world's most exciting young animation talent, fulfilled that wish and more. The likes of Alison Snowden, Debra Solomon, Maciek Albrecht, J.J. Sedelmaier and Marv Newland were all represented, as well as

retrospectives from Jiri Trnka, Te Wei and Rembrandt Films.

"They're experiencing some growing pains, sure," says Terry Thoren, CEO of Klasky Csupo, producer of such television series as *Rugrats* and *Duckman*. "But given their limited resources they did the best they could. Everyone on the Festival staff was pulling all-nighters and by the end things were slipping through the cracks. But the huge animation corporations have to take some responsibility to make sure the Festival is better funded. They have the most to gain."

Indeed, for the first time representatives from every major U.S. animation studio, including Warner Brothers, Disney and Dreamworks, had a significant presence at Annecy. "The boom in studio animation means we're all on the lookout for the best animation talent," says Tom Knott, Recruiting Manager for Warner Brothers Feature Animation.

"Annecy has become not just an art festival, but an industry commercial event," explains Linda Simensky, formerly with Nickelodeon and now Director of Programming at The Cartoon Network. "I don't think the Festival is equipped to handle all that. The people who attend Annecy aren't buyers, they're artists, or at least fans of quality animation."

But nothing could excuse the debacle that occurred during the Festival's final evening. It began when the master of ceremonies, the French television personality, Philippe Dana, ignored his promise to translate the announcements into English, making it impossible for the majority of the audience to have any clue which films were receiving awards and for which categories. Then when Dana crassly asked Tracy Shaw, the attractive producer accepting the Special Jury Prize for the British film *Stressed*, for her phone number, the audience began to whistle — the French equivalent of the boo. A few minutes later the woolly Gabor Csupo, accepting an award for *Real Monsters*, tried to make light of Dana's foolishness by quipping, "Do you now want my number?"

The evening was capped off when the mild mannered Festival favorite, 34-year-old Czech animator Michaela Pavlota, objected to the awkward stopping and starting of her 9-minute film, *Repete*, which received the Unanimous Jury prize. It began with no sound, then was cut off three-quarters the way through. "This festival is very important to some of us," she told the crowd to loud applause and cheers. "But the



way they're handling this ceremony is very unprofessional."

As the dust settles from Annecy, ASIFA (The International Animated Film Association) has begun circulating a petition asking that the Annecy Festival take steps to ensure that in the future it "break quality records rather than quantity records; participants are given the respect which is due them and not treated as mere numbers; the Festival and professionals should not be publicly ridiculed through an award ceremony such as the one which took place 4 June."

Well, at least the evening was animated with a beginning, middle and end. 

Adam Snyder recently took over his father's company, Rembrandt Films (914-279-4158), which had been dormant for 25 years. In the 1960's the company won five Academy Award nominations in five years and an Oscar for *Munro*, written by Jules Feiffer. Snyder has now revived the company with the recent home video release of *Emperor's Nightingale*, which has received spectacular reviews. This puppet animation film by the Czech master Jiri Trnka was first imported by Rembrandt Films in 1951. Boris Karloff was hired to narrate. A collection from the Rembrandt Films Library was recently shown at a retrospective at the Annecy Animation Festival. A similar program will be screened at the Museum of Modern Art early next year. And during the week of December 11, Rembrandt Films' 12-part series, *Nudnik*, will have its U.S. television premiere on The Cartoon Network. *Nudnik* was created by Gene Deitch, who also created *Tom Terrific*. Deitch is working with Rembrandt Films on a number of projects, including new *Nudnik* cartoons and on the animated television series, *Terrible Tessie*, *Heroine of History*.

Rich in Animation

The producer of The Swan Princess is preparing new animated features

By Mike Lyons

In a time when animation is constantly trying to push the envelope, outdo itself and remain high-tech, Richard Rich is happy with the good ol' fairy tale. "I think what's happening is that everyone's trying to be on the cutting edge," says Rich. "But, we're still going to do traditional, classic, family films in animation. While others have abandoned that, we're going to do them with such high-quality and entertainment, that we're not out there to be on the cutting edge." This has been the goal of Rich Animation Studios since its inception in 1986, and today with films such as last year's *The Swan Princess* to its credit, and another project in the production pipeline, it seems as if that goal has indeed been reached.

The foundation for Rich Animation Studios can be traced back to the days when Richard Rich was learning his craft at the "birthplace" of the animated feature, The Walt Disney Studio. Rich started at the studio in 1972, and said the atmosphere there at the time was perfect for fueling his creativity. "At Disney, at that point, it was still a very family-oriented studio," he remembers. "People had worked there their whole lives. Ted Berman, who co-directed *The Fox and the Hound* with me, started when he was eighteen at the Disney studios and he retired from the Disney studio. That's the only job he had in his entire life. There was that kind of feeling, that people were there and they were contributing and it was a really great atmosphere. One felt very fortunate to be a part of that. It was a great time.

"I was really lucky, because, I fell into an opportunity to be an assistant director to John Lounsbery, who was directing *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too*. He trained me in every aspect of movie making in the animation field."

In addition to *Fox and the Hound* and *Tigger Too*, Rich also worked on the studio's biggest projects of the seventies and early eighties, including *The Rescuers*, *Pete's Dragon* and *The Small One*. His last project for the studio was co-directing *The Black Cauldron*, which has become known as a notoriously troubled production. Rich notes that, ten years later, it's interesting to look back on the film. "The studio made the decision to make that film and there was an attempt to try and do a film that would crossover into the teenage market somewhat, and that's always a conflict with animation. It's a very mythical type of picture, but technically and with animation, it's probably one of the finest pictures that Disney has done. Whether or not one likes the dark side of the story, with the Horned King and all of that, it's that medieval type of picture. So, it really stands on its own in that genre."

It was during the end of production on *The Black Cauldron* that Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg came aboard and began their "turnaround" of the studio. Not long after this, Rich made the decision to leave Disney and

form his own studio, after fourteen years of working in this safe, "family" environment. "It felt okay to leave," he says. "The whole atmosphere there had changed quite a bit." Rich also adds that the change was a bit frightening at first, but once he was focused on the future, there was no turning back. "We found that there were a lot of really great artists and really great talent outside the Disney studio and so, it was a very exciting time. You have to realize, when you're your own boss and you have creative control that's a very exciting possibility."

And so, Rich Animation Studios was born. Among the studio's earliest accomplishments were a series of "edutainment" videos, which included animated adaptations of historical legends and stories from the Bible. The videos didn't do much in terms of making Rich Animation Studios a titan in the business, but this didn't seem to bother its' owner. "We deliberately kind of kept a low profile," says Rich. "There was no reason for us to try and claim anything that we were not, and we worked our way up to where we did *The Swan Princess*. That made the mark for us."

The Swan Princess was Rich Animation Studios first foray into feature-length animation.

Richard Rich



The story centered on a young princess named Odette, who is changed into a swan by the evil enchanter, Rothbart and is ultimately saved by her true love, Prince Derek. Richard Rich notes that there were many dynamics in the story that caused the studio to choose it for their debut. "First of all, we wanted to do a romantic love story and it's based on *Swan Lake*, which is a very dramatic story, although we knew we had to make it a happy ending. Secondly, it had the animation element of a princess being changed into a swan and that's something that works really well in animation."

Another element that attracted the studio to *Swan Princess*, was the humor that could be found in the film's sidekicks, although at first, Richard Rich himself was the only one who could foresee this. "We made the decision early on that the first thing we would do is eliminate all the ballerinas, because it's just too complicated. Then, I said 'What would you see in a lake?' and I had this image of a frog sitting on the back of a turtle." From this epiphany came Odette's "swamp sidekicks": Jean-Bob, (voiced by John Cleese), a frog who's convinced he's really a prince, a tough bird named Puffin (whose Irish brogue is provided by Steven

Vinovich) and Speed, (comedian Steven Wright), a slow turtle with a quick sense of humor. The characters are that rare merging of vocal and artistic performance, culminating in three wonderfully distinct personalities.

Like sidekicks, a villain is just as important to any good animated fairy tale. For *The Swan Princess*, the artists knew that this would start early on, with the voice, and for Rothbart, they picked a doozy: Jack Palance! Rich recalls that the actor proved to be extremely helpful in the shaping of Rothbart, "We videotaped all of his recording sessions and then we printed out all of [Jack Palance's] expressions. We had this board that had all these different expressions on it that the animators could use. I mean, he is so animated!" For Rothbart, the line between actor and animated character was also blurred, (much the same way it was for Jeremy Irons and *The Lion King's Scar*). In one scene in *The Swan Princess*, the enchanter Rothbart actually drops to the floor and demonstrates a one armed push-

up, à la Mr. Palance's Oscar acceptance speech. "It's interesting," notes Rich, "for the people who saw the Academy Awards two years ago, that gets a huge laugh. If they don't know much about Jack Palance then it's just a funny thing having a villain do a one-armed push up. It works either way, but boy, for an inside joke that really was a huge laugh."

When it premiered last November, *The Swan Princess* was beaten at the box-office by a re-release of Disney's *The Lion King*, and possibly could have fared better had it not gone up against such a big studio leviathan that already had a built-in audience. Such matters, however, don't phase Richard Rich. "We had great exit polls and reviews on [*Swan Princess*] and we were real excited that people enjoyed our movie as much as they enjoyed the Disney films." He also adds, that the film now has another "life", so to speak. "The one big thing that we have going is that animation is really big in video sales," says Rich. "Most families will buy [videos] for their libraries at home, while a lot of the live action stuff they won't."

This must be true, because, when *The Swan Princess* premiered on home video last August, it debuted at the number one spot on national tape sales charts. Rich hopes that *The*



The title character in Rich Animation's new project, *Feathertop*.

Swan Princess' availability on home video, will not only introduce the film to a new generation, but also allow more people to experience the story's timeless messages. "Love really is a strong influence in all our lives," Rich says, echoing the film's theme. "We should love each other the way that Derek and Odette did, and when you do, there's no obstacle you can't really overcome. Stick with your convictions, I mean, Derek was the only person who believed that Odette was alive. We can make our minds up and when those convictions and commitments are good and wholesome, then stick with them and follow them all the way through. I think that's what the picture teaches us."

Rich Animation Studios is no doubt hoping to express similarly positive themes, as production begins on their next picture tentatively titled, *Feathertop*. Due out in 1998, the film is based on a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and has already peaked Richard Rich's enthusiasm. "I am very excited about this! It's about a scarecrow, who walks and talks, and he gets this magic feather and puts it in his hat and it changes him into the illusion of a man. But, when he walks by a mirror, he's still a scarecrow. So, he has to be very careful, if the hat comes off, he changes instantly back into a

scarecrow. Unbeknownst to him, we find out that if he is willing to sacrifice that life that he has as a scarecrow that actually, he would become real." *Feathertop* has a chance to do this, after falling in love with a human girl, which will give the film a romantic subtext. "What's really interesting about the story," notes Rich, "is that anyone who's good is doing something for someone else, nothing is self-centered in this picture. And everyone who is bad is only worried about themselves and what they get out of life."

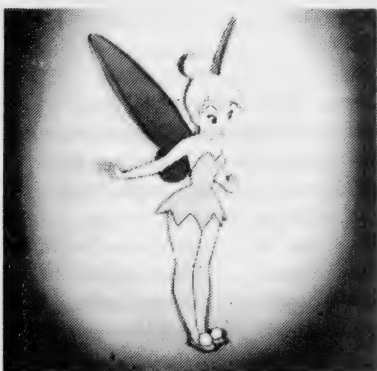
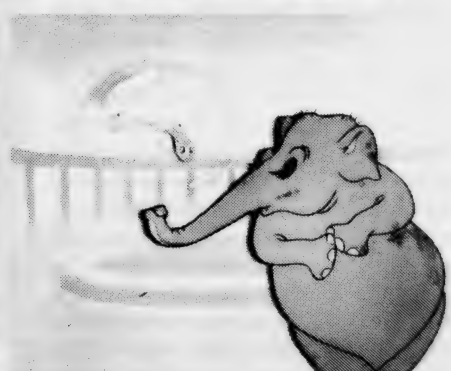
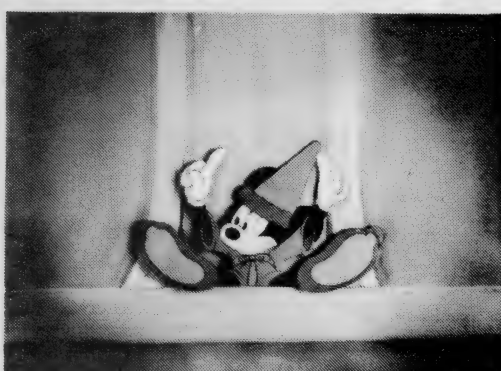
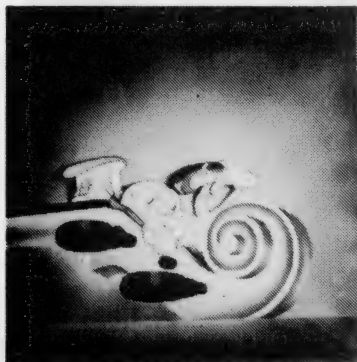
The eclectic cast of characters in *Feathertop*, ranges from a broom named Bristles to a grumpy mouse named Max, who only wants peace and quiet through the film. The two will serve as the film's comic relief, while *Feathertop's* villain will come in the form of Count Grisham who rules and takes advantage of the town where the story is set. In addition the film also features what promises to be a spectacular climax, (and a challenge for Rich Animation Studios), in which *Feathertop* physically supports a

collapsing bridge, over which a horse drawn carriage load of children are passing.

To help them achieve *Feathertop's* final result, Rich Animation Studios is going to be using computers to supplement some of the animation. "*The Swan Princess*, we did in the very traditional form, where we did cel painting and xeroxing and all of that," says Rich. "It could very well be that *The Swan Princess* is the last classical animated film that was done in that style. It has a unique look and it has a nice look but, we could not do that again." *Feathertop*, on the other hand, will use computers for much of the colorization and camera work on the film. Regardless, like many in his industry, Rich doesn't see computer animation as any threat to tradition, not yet, anyway. "It's going to be quite a while before computers can in-between with the finesse that animators have, getting all the overlap and the 'squash and stretch' and all the stuff that is just a sense of timing that animators add to it." Rich also notes, "Where you were to have carriages and inanimate objects that need to hold a particular volume and form, that's where the computer is the best. But, if

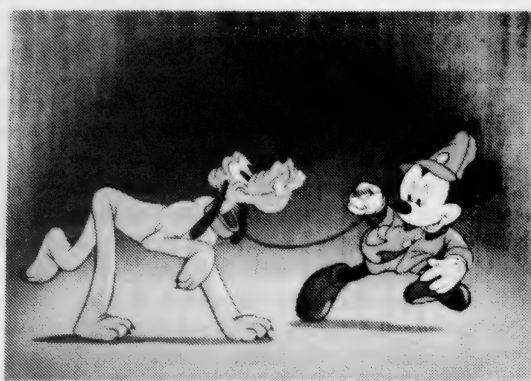
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ANIMATING **TOY STORY**—

THE FIRST COMPUTER GENERATED FEATURE

by Karl Cohen

Toy Story, opening November 22, 1995, is a milestone in animation. It is the first feature made completely by computers. This finely crafted work stars toys that live in Andy's room and come alive when humans are not present. It is a buddy film and begins with Woody, a pull-string cowboy doll, discovering he might be replaced as Andy's favorite toy when Buzz Lightyear arrives as a birthday gift. The voice actors include Tom Hanks as Woody, Tim Allen as Buzz, a spaceman action figure; Jim Varney as Slinky, Don Rickles as Mr. Potato Head and Wallace Shawn as a timid dinosaur. The music is by Randy Newman. It was created by director John Lasseter at Pixar in Richmond, Ca. for Walt Disney Pictures.

The national press will probably give a great deal of coverage to *Toy Story*. The press will hopefully praise the delightful story, the film's unique look, the outstanding soundtrack and the humor. Some of the humor is aimed at kids, but other moments are intended to entertain adults.

There should be several articles about the brilliant director and technical staff who made this work. Technical articles will no doubt discuss the software developments created for the picture and how the company combined hundreds of state-of-the-art Sun computers to render the images. A few articles will include a lot of mind-boggling statistics that only a few people will understand. For example there are 500,000 basic arithmetic operations per pixel, 4.5 million lines of code describing the 366 objects and characters in the film, and the amount of RenderMan data files sent through the renderer were 34 terabytes.

In the coming hoopla over the film the press may forget that this is still an animated feature made by a team of 27 hand-picked animators working thousands of hours to bring the toys to life. What went on in the animation department may not have been that flashy, and therefore news worthy in the popular press, but it is still the animator that is the heart of the production.

The animation process used in *Toy Story* is news worthy as it marks the beginning of new production methods and techniques for making animated features. Some stages of the production are quite different from the techniques used to make traditional cel animated features, or even ones using computer ink and paint systems.

Pixar animators work in front of large state-of-the-art Silicon Graphics workstations, while



Supervising animator Pete Docter works on an expression. © The Walt Disney Co. All rights reserved.

at Disney animators work at drawing tables with paper and pencils. Pixar animators are closer to stop-motion animators than to cel artists. They use computer commands and controls to tell the computer how to move an arm, leg, muscle of the face or... at an exact increment for each frame of the picture.

Several animators had previously worked for Henry Selick on *Nightmare Before Christmas* and for Danger Productions on *Bump in the Night*. Animation director Pete Docter says they were not necessarily looking for stop-motion animators, but it turned out they are trained to understand character animation and they have a good sense of timing and acting. A lot of the computer animators that were considered didn't have those skills. Their backgrounds were often quite technical. A new adage is that you can teach an animator to use a computer, but you can't necessarily teach a computer person to animate.

Pete Docter says that to communicate with his staff he used some traditional animation terms including "slow in, slow out, squash, stretch, and opposing action." At other times they used a new vocabulary. He said, "occasionally you walk into a room and people are talking about setting your F-not to this and your Bandit to that. There is a lot of weird lingo that comes with the software, and it sounds pretty strange to people who are not familiar

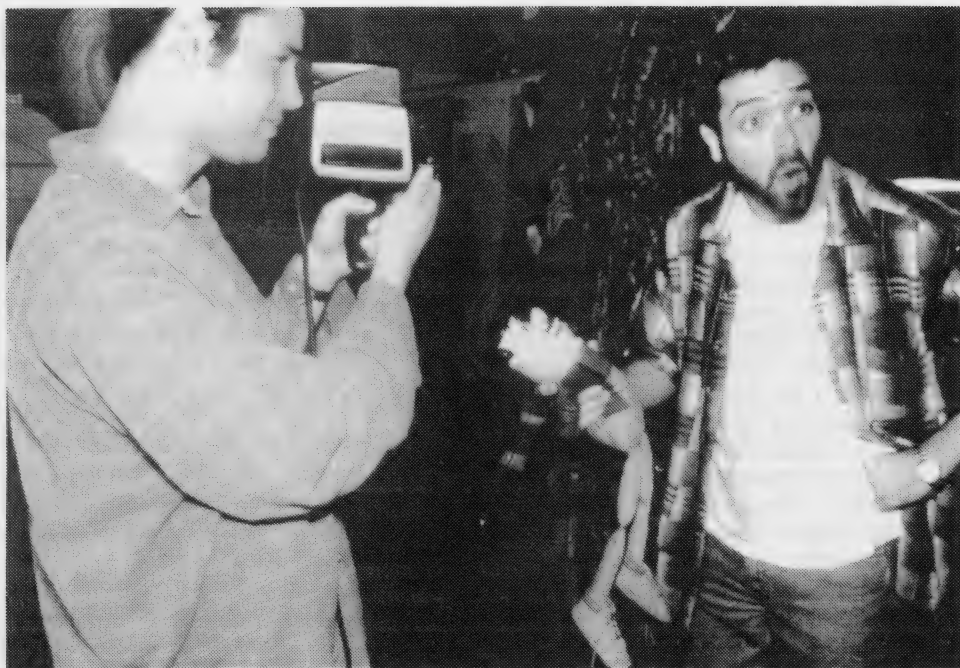
with it."

There was also a lot of non-verbal communication used by both Docter and John Lasseter. They spent time acting out their ideas to show animators how they thought Woody should move his hands or...

The animators sometimes used a video camera and monitor to study movement. For example they might tape Lasseter making a complex move and then study it in slow motion so they could understand how his body moved.

Animators could also watch videos of Tom Hanks and the other voice actors reading their lines. They watched this footage to get ideas as to how to animate facial and hand gestures and other body movements.

An enormous number of hours of labor must have gone into the film. Production began in January, 1993, and ended during the summer of 1995. Pete Docter said that at first people worked regular shifts, but early in 1995 people were asked to work Saturdays and sometimes long into the evening. Docter said he worked both as a director and animator and that he would direct by day and then come back after dinner and work on his scenes until midnight or 1:00 am. "It got pretty heavy, I'd go home just to eat and sleep." As animation director he would coordinate the creative efforts of his department including watching for continuity errors when different animators worked on



Animators Ash Brannon (with camera) and Colin Brady record a movement to study.
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adjoining scenes. He had to check to see that the final image of something in one scene would match the position of it in the next shot.

Despite the long hours morale at Pixar was extremely high. People said it was fun to work on *Toy Story* and that they believed it was going to be a great feature. The place had a relaxed atmosphere. Some people had toys in their work spaces along with humorous images on the walls. Molly, Jenny and a couple of other dogs roamed freely through the building on a daily basis. During one visit to the studio somebody asked if anybody wanted anything from the store as he rode down the hall towards an exit on a skateboard.

Docter said not all animation studios are run in this relaxed manner. He recalled one friend in Los Angeles saying he had to get used to working with a tyrant. A common complaint in the animation industry is that some animation projects are just plain boring. That isn't the case at Pixar.

The job of the animator at Pixar is just one of many steps that was needed to make *Toy Story*. Docter gave a brief overview of what happens before and after something was worked on by his staff.

The process began with a script that was rewritten several times by a team of writers before it was approved by Disney. At the same time storyboard sketches of each scene were made. Disney's press department says 25,000 storyboard drawings were made. While the story was being developed artists and designers were hired to create general ideas as to what toys, people, buildings, rooms, objects and other things in the film might look like. As decisions

were made the art department carefully designed everything. Once their final drawings were approved, technical modelers were given the sketches. The drawings served as a form of blueprint for them as they created 3D computer models of the sketches. Two sculptors were employed to build the heads of Buzz, Woody, the humans and other complicated forms that can not be described easily mathematically. The surface of the sculptures was scanned with a hand-held device to input their shapes into the computer.

Before the completed model in the computer went to the animators the layout department assembled all the models for a given scene and checked that the model worked correctly with the background. They would create the camera moves that the animators would work to, and make sure things wouldn't overlap each other in the wrong way and to make sure the background was big enough so that the edge of the art wouldn't show as the camera moved. In *Toy Story* what you generally see on the screen is from the vantage point of a toy.

After a scene was animated and approved it went to one of the 30 technical directors (a.k.a. animation scientists as they also created the special software that was used in the production). They were responsible for giving the art its finished look. Some technical directors concentrated on the shading of surfaces and others did the lighting. They were in charge of all the tiny details that went into the look of the film from light reflections on a shiny surface, to making hair, plastic or stone look realistic. Most of the lighting and coloring designs of the film were based on pastel drawings by art director

Ralph Eggleston.

Once everything was approved the work went to the rendering department where computers, operating 24-hours-a-day, slowly rendered each frame of the picture and outputted it onto 35mm film at 1536 x 922 pixels per frame.

The man who watched over this complex process was director John Lasseter (read our interview with him in this issue of **ANIMATO!**). He worked closely with almost every creative person on the staff. It was his responsibility to make sure the best people were hired so his work would go as smoothly as possible. He also worked closely with Ralph Guggenheim and Bonnie Arnold, his producers. Guggenheim and Arnold were in charge of the production budget and schedule.

Members of Lasseter's staff say you learn a lot from him, that he has a great sense of acting, is clever at inventing funny things for the characters to do, is quick to understand problems and is fast to solve them. He is praised as a fine storyteller. He is also described as a great guy.

When the reviews and articles about *Toy Story* come out the most frequently mentioned name should be John Lasseter. The film began as his idea and it was his energy that brought it to the screen. It is also important to remember that film is a collaborative effort and that *Toy Story* would not have been possible without the help of the 28 animators, 30 technical directors, and all the other artists, writers, modelers, administrative assistants and other members of Pixar's staff of 110 people.



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Turn To Page 48.

An Interview with John Lasseter

The director of *Toy Story* speaks on the challenges of producing the first computer-animated feature film

by Karl Cohen

Toy Story will become the world's first completely computer generated animated feature when it is released on Nov. 22, 1995. It was co-written and directed by John Lasseter at Pixar in Richmond, California, for Walt Disney Pictures. It will be their big animated feature for the 1995 Thanksgiving/Christmas season.

The following interview was conducted in John Lasseter's office, a large room with toys covering his desk, window ledge and shelves. He sat in a wheelchair with a plastic drink holder hanging from one armrest and a broken squeeze bulb horn hanging from the other arm. One of the films 27 animators later told me that there are no extra chairs by their computer workstations so instead of having Lasseter stand or carry a chair around, they surprised him with the wheelchair so he could sit next to them when they were having their daily afternoon reviews about their work-in-progress.

The interview began by my mentioning that a friend who works for him said, "John is a dream to work with. He's one of the main reasons people work there. Everybody loves him." I said I wanted to focus the interview on that individual and not cover the technical end of the film as I knew that was handled by others. I then asked, "What are your strong points?"

"Our strong points are our storytelling ability. Even though we are working with computer animation, the computers are just a tool, just like expensive fancy pencils. It's not the pencils that make the animation, it's the animator... We feel the story drives everything. Even though our film will be innovative and look different, a few minutes into the movie the audience will say, ok, I understand this world, it's different, fine, now entertain me. It's the story and the great characters that are going to keep people on the edge of their seats for 77 minutes. That's what people are going to bring away from it... Also, like in all my short films I love coming up with characters with warmth, heart. That is what we set out to do."

How did you get the idea for the script for Toy Story?

"It kind of grew out of *Tin Toy* (his 1988, Oscar winning short - he also won two student Oscars and an Oscar nomination for *Luxo Jr.* in

1986). I sort of think of the characters that we have developed in the past as our employees. With *Tin Toy* I thought the notion of toys being alive had great potential. I felt there was something more that we could do there. As you can tell [looking around the room] I love toys, I think most animators do.

"I started talking about ideas for a feature with Joe Ramft, Pete Docter and Andrew Stanton. We had been working toward that for a long time. Right after *KnickKnack* (1989) we were a seven person crew with somewhat proven tools. We decided to start building up our production staff and get production experience. The first step was to do commercials.

"We thought the next step was to see if we could do something in a longer format. We came up with the idea of a *Tin Toy Christmas*, a 24 minute TV special. We actually wrote a Christmas story about Tinny, the character from *Tin Toy*. It was a great little story. When we got into it we realized that networks were willing to pay as much for a 24 minute film as we would get for 2 commercials, two 30 second spots. That was financially unfeasible. It was at that time that Disney said they were willing to talk to us, so we didn't need that step.

"Disney had been trying to hire me back after each of my short films was completed, so I said to them why can't I do a film for you up here? We have this brilliant technology here, it's a great set-up. At that time *Nightmare Before Christmas* broke a precedent that all Disney films were made by Disney in-house. It was also obvious that animation had become so profitable that Disney knew they couldn't turn-out as much work as they knew they could sell. They started looking for other producers that could do films within the Disney framework.

"When we talked to them they were very open to the idea of our doing a feature for them.



Director John Lasseter © The Walt Disney Co. All rights reserved.

They said great. We signed a three picture deal and started working for them in July, 1991.

"The story for *Toy Story* began with the four of us talking over all sorts of ideas. We had the *Tin Toy Christmas* idea so we said lets see if this could be a feature instead of a holiday film. What really hit was when we came up with the notion, after looking at all types of stories, to make a buddy picture. Disney hadn't really done that in animation. They usually make a fantasy film with princes and princesses and so on."

How did you get the freedom not to do a formula film?

"We basically insisted from the very beginning that we didn't want to become just a production arm for Disney where they say, 'Here guys, this is the next script you are going to do.' We insisted from the beginning that we wanted to create our own ideas. They were open to that from the beginning. That was really what they wanted."

Toy Story opens with a bang and keeps on going. Its exciting. Why did you decide to open the film that way?

characters. They are a lot more fun to animate and will make a film much more successful. Secondly, we wanted it to be funny. I love to go to movies and laugh. For our beginning we wanted a big opening like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. You start with a bang before the credits... We wanted to establish our characters in a fun way." [He also discussed how the pace of films today is often phenomenally fast compared to *Dumbo* and *Bambi*.]

Did you conceive of your film having songs?

"When we conceived the picture we didn't think of it as a musical. When we started talking to Disney they were used to musicals and they felt we needed some songs. How would we fit them in? We didn't want the characters to break out in song.

"With the help of Disney we came up with a really neat format, which is what we call a 'cohesive song score.' The notion is like Simon and Garfunkel's music in *The Graduate* or Cat Stevens' music in *Harold and Maude* where the songs are more or less written about what's going on in the movie, but they are sung by somebody else, not the characters. So that's what we have.

"From the beginning I wanted Randy Newman to do the music. His music has two things that I love, he has tremendous heart in his music and a sense of humor."

How did you manage your time as director of a major feature?

"When I became the director of this project I slowly stopped doing things myself. It was weird. I started by doing a lot of drawings, a lot of writing, but I got to the point where so and so needs me and people were knocking on my door constantly. Luckily, I had hired some extremely talented people. Ed Catmull, president of Pixar, gave me one of the greatest pieces of management advice I've ever received. I always wondered how he was able to get such a great group here because he is so brilliant. He said 'I always hire people who are smarter than myself.' He did it!

"When we started doing *Toy Story* we tried to get the best people we could get such as Andrew Stanton, Pete Docter and Joe Ranft to develop the story. I would come in and have brainstorming sessions with them and then have to go away to do something else. I got Ralph Eggleston, a brilliant art director in right away because I love his work. He and I just clicked so he is a key designer on the film.

"In the beginning you throw a wide net in terms of the story and the design of the picture. What's this possibly going to be? We hired a bunch of different illustrators to do a wide range of pre-production art. From that we started seeing all sorts of things we liked. We started putting things together. Ralph Eggleston helped bring it together and define the look.

"We called the look 'caricatured reality.' The shapes of everything are a little more cartoony than real life, but its basically like seeing things in the real world. When you really begin to look at it, it's caricature. The door knobs are bigger, cars a little more squatty, yet its not like Toon Town. We did not want to do Toon Town. Its somewhere between Toon Town and a live action world."

How long did it take you to get the green light to go into production?

"It took a long time. We started developing the picture after we signed our three picture deal with Disney in July, 1991. We started to develop the story and started to get the look going. We went through a number of different drafts of the script. Things really began to take shape when we hired Joss Whedon, a talented young screenwriter from LA. He has worked on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Speed* and *Waterworld*. Tom Schumacher at Disney was also a great asset. The combination of those two talents helped us get the green light in January, 1993."

Did you have a daily routine when you were in production?

"My daily routine is printed on my dance card every day. [He pulled his appointment card out of a shirt pocket and said this is a medium day, normally it goes down to bottom of the page and a couple of times it has gone onto the back of the page.]

"When we were in full production I would get here about 8:30 a.m. and meet in the screening room with the animators. We would have about an hour or an hour and a half of dailies and look at every scene the animators were working on. The reason we would do it in the screening room is that we have every animators' workstation hooked up to the screening room video projector. I wanted the animators to get used to seeing their animation big. We're making a feature film that will be played on giant screens. You see timing and pacing changes on a big screen.

"From there I would go and discuss lighting dailies with the technical directors. We would concentrate on the lighting and coloring. It is sort of the equivalent of working on color models in a cel animation project.

"Throughout the day I would have meetings with the art director, technical directors, editors and other people. When we were developing models we would also have model reviews. I worked closely with the art department because they designed everything in the movie - color, lighting, the objects, everything. Everything in the movie that you see was designed by them. It's not like having a prop shop where you can just go to the store and buy something. We had to create everything that is there. We wanted a believable world so we had to fill nooks and crannies with things.

"There were 76 characters and over 350 models in the film. We would have model reviews. I would walk around like a doctor to each modelers' workstation to look at what they were working on, which is why they gave me this [referring to the wheelchair]. I would have a little entourage like a doctor with his students or something. I'd be there with the art director, the designer, and so on and we would sit there and discuss the models. Most of the time they would bring me lunch - I would rarely have time to go out for lunch.

"In the afternoon I'd have another session with the animators, but this time it was an animation walk-through. I would walk around and work with each animator at their workstation. That is where we would act things out and do stuff like that.

"I was constantly meeting with editorial. That is the war room. We would go over the story reels and see how the cutting was progressing.

"I also met frequently with Craig Good and the layout crew. First, you do the storyboards and then you do the story reel. Once you know what you're going to make you have to create the models. Then the layout crew takes the story sketches and the models and sets everything up and makes sure the camera works right. We would go into the screening room and look at sequences to make sure the models were in their proper places and worked right. We would work very closely with the editors on that.

"There were always meetings with Ralph Guggenheim and Bonnie Arnold, the producers, on different aspects of the production. There were recording sessions. Sometimes the recording sessions would be here in San Francisco, but most of the time they were in L.A. Sometimes we flew to New York. I recently had a recording session in Salt Lake City. We would go to where the actors were. I went to Detroit, Michigan once for Tim Allen. It was like a whirlwind...

"The score is being written now. The final scoring is done after the picture is finished. The songs were locked down early on. We had scratch versions of the three songs about a year ago. Dialog is still a constant ongoing thing. Typically, you like to lock down the dialog. You record the dialog and the animation is done to the dialog. You put it all together and have a preview and sometimes you might tweak things or change a line. With the computer we have actually gone into a shot and changed a line of dialog slightly and then gone back and changed the mouth a little bit after the fact and then rerender it. We don't do that often, but with the computer you have that ability."

How did you develop your talents over the years? Did you start as a kid? What made your

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PETER PUCK:

WHEN HANNA-BARBERA MET THE NHL

More than 20 years after his creation, Peter Puck is alive and well - and ready for a comeback

By Chuck Miller

The Atlanta Flames hockey game just entered its first intermission period, and the television commentators discussed the early action. Most viewers took that cue to head for the fridge, the bathroom, or the wrestling match on another station.

A few moments later, the next picture the home audience saw was an animated puck sliding down a cartoon ice surface. "At this time," the puck said from its orange-colored mouth, "I'm going to talk about timing, equipment, officials and players."

Then a hockey stick gave the puck a solid slapshot.

"Hey, cool it fellas," the puck piped up, "I got something to say!"

Then, as hockey gloves and skates popped out of the puck like legs from a tortoise's shell, the talking slab of rubber stood up.

"Howdy fans, Peter Puck here to lay some facts on you about hockey - the world's fastest team sport."

With those first words, aired in 1973 between periods of an NBC *NHL Game of the Week*, Peter Puck began a career as hockey's cartoon entertainer/educator, or as he once described himself, "your ol' pokecheck professor."

Brian McFarlane, a longtime broadcaster and one of the main commentators on the *Game of the Week*, helped create Peter Puck. "When I was with NBC in 1973, my boss, Scotty Connell, decided that our intermission features needed to be more instructional in nature. He called Joe Barbera out at Hanna-Barbera, and said, 'We need a little animated character to describe hockey.' They asked me to send Hanna-Barbera some of my literature on hockey, some of my books, and describe what an offside is and icing and that sort of thing."

When they were done, Hanna-Barbera created a talking, skating, wisecracking hockey puck. Joseph Barbera himself gave the character the alliterative nickname of "Peter Puck." "Joe said to me several months later," said

MacFarlane, "'I just gave him the name Peter Puck. It just popped out of my mouth. We decided, hey, that's all right, we'll stick with that.'"



Peter Puck in action

Although Puck's body was drawn by Hanna-Barbera artists, his voice belonged to actor Micky Dolenz [The Monkees], who did voice work for the cartoon studio in the 1970's for such memorable shows as *Devlin* and *Wonder Wheels*.

For two years on the NBC *NHL Game of the Week* (and five more on Canada's long-running sports show *Hockey Night in Canada*), Peter Puck educated and entertained the home audience.

"NBC brought in a lot of sportscasters and sportswriters from the Southern markets to take them to a hockey game, their first NHL hockey game for most of them," said McFarlane, "and we showed them Peter Puck before the game, there were 2, 3, 4 episodes on offside and icings and what the referee does. It was very successful. And I used to introduce Peter on those shows - and soon people referred to me as 'Peter Puck's father,' and wherever I went, some people would kid around and ask me, 'Mr. Puck, how's your son Peter?'"

Each episode took place in the middle of a fast-paced animated hockey game. The instant Peter noticed real-live viewers were watching the game, he would say hi, skate up to the

camera, and describe rules and concepts of hockey. Many times he would use the players and the officials in his hockey game to show how plays are set up, what hand signals are used

when describing penalties, and how to differentiate icing from a two-line pass. Before long, kids who wouldn't normally know a slapshot from buckshot could now correctly cite the offside and icing rules as easily as singing the preamble to the Constitution.

Meanwhile, both the red-sweatered home team and the blue-jerseyed road team swatted Peter around, often in the middle of his lessons. Sometimes the players apologized for whacking Peter with their slapshot; other times Peter would wise off about the goaltenders and their "Friday the 13th" face shields.

"Some of the letters people send me were kind of cute," said McFarlane. "I used to keep the best letters, because kids would send in a drawing of Peter Puck or make a snowman out of Peter Puck, take a picture of it and send it in. I can remember letters like, 'Dear

Peter, does it hurt when they hit you on your bottom?' He even got marriage proposals and things of that nature."

Hanna-Barbera used their "limited animation" technique extensively during the Peter Puck series. Diagrammed hockey plays and rules were shown as overhead shots with animated dots and dashed lines. When forwards and defensemen were used, their movements might be reused in future episodes. Sometimes that caused unintentional incongruities, such as an all-left-handed team versus an all-right-handed team.

Then there was the time Peter described how Lester Patrick, owner of the New York Rangers, once played in goal when the Rangers' starting goaltender was injured. Throughout that episode, Lester Patrick's head had been traced from an old photograph - and Patrick's face seldom changed throughout the episode.

Only nine episodes were made during Peter Puck's tenure on NBC. Since creating new animated episodes would have cost upwards of \$200,000 for a series, McFarlane tried some novel approaches during Peter's appearances

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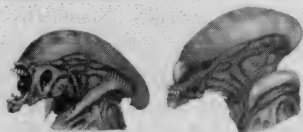
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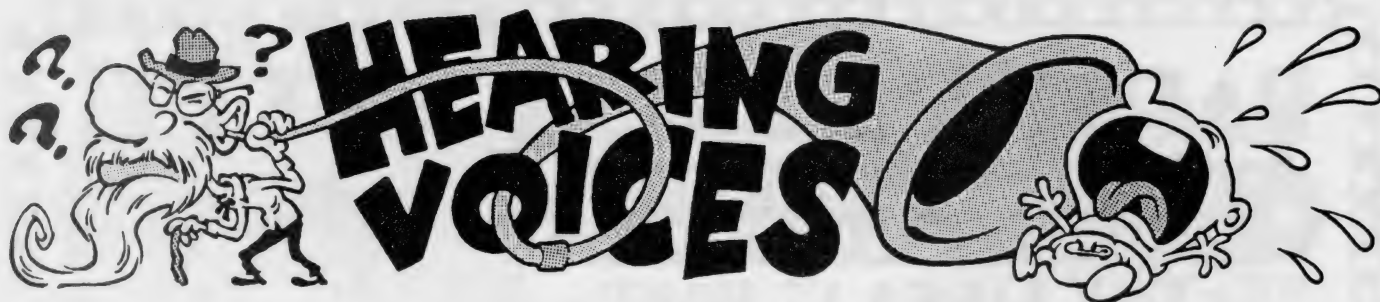
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HEARING VOICES



Jell-O Again, This is Jack Benny (Or is it Jack Lescoulie?)

By Keith Scott

(Note: From down under, Australian cartoon voice specialist and animation historian Keith Scott is the guest columnist for this issue's archaeological dig into animation's audio ether.)

This, the fourth column dedicated to identifying the unfairly unbilled cartoon voices heard in vintage theatrical cartoons, has been handed over to me this issue by Hames Ware, originator of the column and one of my two collaborators. Hames, based in Arkansas, and Graham Webb in England, have spent many fruitful years researching this topic. Having joined them over a year ago, we have spent the last year diligently analyzing dozens of cartoon soundtracks from Warner, MGM, Lantz and Disney, and comparing many voices in contemporary old radio shows. So far the results have been highly gratifying.

Arcane though our subject may be, we firmly believe it's way past the 'statute of limitations' for these talented performers to get the recognition already accorded the better knowns in this highly specialized field (like Mel Blanc, Jim Backus, June Foray et al).

This time I'd like to concentrate on a couple of voices from the 1930's, specifically in Warner Brothers cartoons, which, along with the grossly underexposed Columbia/Charles Mintz output, were the main purveyors of celebrity caricatures in animated form.

Just as, in the 1990's, entertainers like Bruce Springsteen and Michael Jackson are parodied in TV cartoons like *The Simpsons* and *Animaniacs*, the top show-biz names from sixty years ago proved a rich source of comedic material for the big screen cartoons. The great names of radio (at the time, the equivalent in reach and power of today's multi-channelled and international television nets) were caricatured - occasionally mercilessly, mostly affectionately - by the directors and animators of yore. Thus, audiences of the day were tickled to see cartoonized versions of their favorite radio comedians like Jack Benny and Fred Allen, as well as superstar pop singers the



Jack Lescoulie (holding the sporting equipment) in one of his non-*Today Show* television assignments from 1958. He co-starred with Fred Davis on a game show entitled *Brains and Brawn*.

calibre of Bing Crosby and Rudy Vallee (Bing being a particular favorite of the cartoon makers).

The Jack Benny voice first turned up at Warner Brothers (as Jack Bunny) in cartoons like Tex Avery's delightful *I Love to Singa* (1936) and Frank Tashlin's *The Woods are Full of Cuckoos* (1937), the latter being a six minute satire of the then current radio show *The Gillette Community Sing*, starring Milton Berle and Wendell Hall. But without doubt the best Benny mimic began to be heard in 1939, with Chuck Jones's first stab at a certain "little black duck" in his *Daffy Duck and the Dinosaur*. In this cartoon, the still embryonic Daffy engages in several altercations with one Casper Caveman

and a large pet Dinosaur.

Casper spoke in the petulant and unmistakable tones of the great Jack Benny and it was a fine imitation.

I first met Chuck Jones in Sydney in 1990, and although this affable and legendary genius admits he has a terrible memory for many of the names of vintage cartoon actors, I certainly struck paydirt first time out, when I asked him, "Who did the Jack Benny caveman in *Daffy Duck and the Dinosaur*?" He looked off into space for just two seconds, before replying, "Oh, that was Jack Lescoulie!" He later explained that Lescoulie (in 1939 a 22 year old radio comic who years later matured into one of

the long-running hosts of NBC's *Today Show*) was a friend of animator Phil Monroe.

Being a completist and research-hound by nature, I still required further evidence (on the slim chance that Chuck may have unknowingly transposed Lescoulie's name with another person's). Next the fine animator and cartoon history guru Mark Kausler, who had collected episodes of *The Joe Penner Show* which were known to feature a very young Mel Blanc in the cast, told me he'd heard Lescoulie's name mentioned in at least one of these shows.

Suddenly it all fell into place: I remembered seeing Lescoulie's name in a radio catalog, starring in a show from 1939-40 (the timeframe was right) called *The Grouch Club*. I called my friend and fellow voice-spottter Ken Greenwald, who works for Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters in Hollywood, and sure enough, there were two episodes of *The Grouch Club* in PPB's archives.

Ken immediately dubbed them for me and sent them off by air-mail. Once received, I somewhat feverishly commenced playing the first tape and, lo and behold, there was the voice of Casper Caveman (and indeed, the voice of Jack Benny in Friz Freleng's 1940 *Malibu Beach Party*, among others). Chuck Jones was right on! In fact, *The Grouch Club* proved a revelation.

Among the actors heard on this rather hip comedy show were many other cartoon voices - one of whom was chosen from this very series by Tex Avery (himself an avid radio-comedy

listener) for the leading role in his 1939 epic, *Dangerous Dan McFoo*. This portly actor was Arthur Q. Bryan who on *The Grouch Club* essayed the voice of *The Little Man* (later called Waymond Wadswiffe), a voice that eventually evolved into the one and only Elmer Fudd, launching Bryan into a 20 year cartoon career lasting until his death in 1959.

Also on *The Grouch Club* as regulars were the very funny Phil Kramer (and once again in 1939, Tex Avery gave Kramer his animated debut as the nasal master of ceremonies in *Hamateur Night*), and young Walter Tetley who several years later became one of the Andy Panda voices for Walter Lantz, and who is most remembered by baby-boomers as Sherman in *Peabody's Improbable History* on Jay Ward's wonderful *Rocky and His Friends* TV cartoons.

Furthermore Mel Blanc, Robert C. Bruce, Harry Lang, Mary Milford - each of them a cartoon contributor - were all heard on this little-remembered pre World War II comedy show which originated from KFWB in its first season. Interestingly, this was Warner Bros.' own radio station.

The question remained, how many more unknown radio shows were out there which would yield various great cartoon actors? As it turns out there were several, but, as space is limited, these will be the subject for future columns.

And now, before we wind up this issue's

animated vocal excavation, a footnote to Hames Ware's previous columns which in part discussed the various squeaky-voiced cartoon actresses, such as Bernice Hansen (MGM's Little Cheezer, and innumerable cartoons for Warner), Gay Seabrook (*The Night Watchman* and the early voice of Sniffles the mouse), and Sara Berner (the second Sniffles voice, and ubiquitous in West Coast theatrical cartoons from 1939-50).

Ken Greenwald, this time inadvertently supplied us with yet another name. Earlier, he had dubbed for me a copy of a 1969 Pioneer Broadcasters luncheon held in honor of Mel Blanc. The half-hour's worth of speeches were interesting - Alan Reed, at the time Fred Flinstone to Blanc's Barney Rubble - hosted the function. But what was most revealing came at the start, when announcer Michael Rye, introducing the festivities, mentioned several guests who were in the audience. Among various big names like Dennis Day (with whom Mel worked for over a decade on Jack Benny's radio show) was a Shirley Reed - described as a ventriloquist, musician and Mel Blanc's co-worker in 1930's cartoons as the voice of Petunia Pig. Shirley Reed???

Yes, yet another "tiny voice" specialist! Shirley could also sing a mean song - several tapes of a 1934-35 syndicated radio show called *Komedly Kapers* have since verified that - and

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Happy Birthday Betty!

As animation's favorite cartoon heroine celebrates her 65th birthday, she is still far from retirement age

By G. Michael Dobbs

The legend is that in the crowded studio at 1600 Broadway in mid-town Manhattan, Grim Natwick was given the assignment of animating part of the Fleischer Studio's newest sound cartoon *Dizzy Dishes*. Part of Natwick's assignment was creating and animating a night club singer. For inspiration, he was handed a photo of then-popular Helen Kane, a bouncy brunette who was acclaimed for her high pitched child-like, but none-the-less sexy, singing voice.

That was the beginning of Betty Boop, quite possibly the most popular female cartoon character in the world. This year, Betty marks her 65th birthday, and there are no signs that the eternal flapper is slowing down. Her image is everywhere from tee shirts and beach towels to mugs and giftware. Kitchen Sink Press is publishing a new collection of the Boop comic strips from the 1930s, and the video collections of her cartoons are still in print and popular. One can be sure that someone in the entertainment industry is currently pipe-dreaming about a Boop feature or cartoon series.

The often-times surreal and risqué Boop cartoons are revered today for their

imagination and hipness. Their funky urban qualities continue to delight audiences 60 years later. Of all of the studios producing animation in the 1930s, the Fleischer Studio made cartoons which best reflected the blend of emotions that characterized the 1930s; a contradictory blend of hope and despair and of domesticity and running wild.

The Boop series was the celluloid address for some of the most free-form

stream-of-consciousness material seen on American movie screens. Betty was human, but her best friend and sometimes "boy" friend, Bimbo, was a dog. Sometimes Betty existed as a pen and ink creation in "the real world," (coming from the inkwell as her other pal Ko-Ko did), but sometimes she definitely lived in a cartoon universe.

For anal retentives who point to such wild changes in setting and format in the early Betty Boops as evidence of sloppy and careless cartooning, my response is "Banana oil!" The Boop cartoons clearly had one intention and that was to entertain.



(© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

The fact that artists at the Fleischer Studios produced some of the most loved shorts from that era was a happy by-product of their effort to make Depression audiences laugh.



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Beginnings



In 1930, The Fleischer Studio was in a state of change. Max Fleischer had recovered from the economic failure of his Red Seal distribution company just four years previous. He was back in charge of his own operation with his brother Dave as the vice president. Establishing a distribution deal with Paramount Pictures, Fleischer was trying to regain the prominence he once had in the industry.

The challenge, though, was coming from the introduction of sound. The "talkies" had revolutionized the movie industry with only a handful of silent films produced for the few hold-out theaters in the country. The two biggest stars in silent animation were Felix the Cat and Ko-Ko the Clown. With the coming of sound, Ko-Ko, a classic pantomime character, seemed out of place.

Fleischer produced his "first" sound cartoon in 1929, and wisely adapted his famous Song Cartunes with the famous Bouncing Ball to sound production. (Fleischer was no stranger to sound as he had produced the first synchronized sound cartoons with Dr. Lee DeForrest in 1924. Both inventors were ahead of their times, and Disney's triumph with *Steamboat Willie* obscured their earlier accomplishments to generations of film historians.)

The success of the Song Cartunes aside, Fleischer needed a new star to replace Ko-Ko. A dog-like creature named Bimbo was created as an obvious answer to Mickey Mouse. The design was crude, and the character was actually little more than a stick figure. Bimbo didn't make much impact in the early Fleischer "Talkartoons."

The late Myron "Grim" Natwick was a fairly recent addition to the Fleischer operation. An animation vet, Natwick had entered animation prior to the First World War at the studio set up by publisher William Randolph Hearst to publicize his newspaper's comic strip characters. Later, Natwick studied art in Europe for three years and came back to the United States where he worked on Felix and Krazy Kat shorts.

Producing shorts at the Fleischer Studio in 1930 was a far looser process that one could imagine. Animators had more responsibility for plots and gags, and there wasn't direction in the

accepted sense. The early sound Fleischer shorts were, more often than not, merely a collection of gags linked together by a very general "plot." The creative process was a carry-over from the silent days, but it was clear a more standardized method of production was needed to meet the demands of sound.

Grim Natwick recalled to me in an 1978 interview, "the animator simply received a scene or a group of scenes or a whole picture. An animator like myself would receive an entire picture, and they'd put a couple of younger animators to work with us. The animator was virtually the director of the picture. If there was any characters necessary, the animator created them and animated them. There was no supervision.

"I remember on this picture [*Dizzy Dishes*] there was a 'Boop Oop A Doop' song and it had been recorded by Helen Kane, and I believe at the time, before the unions got tough, they may have even used her original track.

"In the first picture...I animated a big part of it. I created the character [who would become Betty Boop]. They had this little dog Bimbo. She had to sing and dance and I forgot about the dog thing. She became looking more and more like a girl. In her early pictures, the first two or three perhaps, she retained those long poodle ears."

Dizzy Dishes is a remarkably crude affair. There really isn't a plot, but instead a string of gags centered in a night club.

Natwick worked on the first six shorts which featured Betty as part of the cast. He insisted to me that, other than changing her dog ears to earrings, the design and personality changes to the character were "insignificant." While Natwick was a trailblazer, the ultimate success of the character rested on the animators, writers, voice actresses and composers who would follow him after he left the studio. One should consider that his comments were made to me at a time in which he was attempting to establish his role as Betty's creator as a means to ask for royalties on Betty Boop merchandise.

Natwick's time at the Fleischer Studios was brief. He accepted an offer in 1931 to join the Ub Iwerks Studio in California. In 1934, he was hired by Walt Disney where he eventually



A mid-1920s publicity shot of Max Fleischer and Ko-Ko. Ko-Ko's success as a pantomime character consigned him to just supporting roles in the sound era.

did his most significant work on *Snow White* and the *Seven Dwarfs*, and by 1939, he was back with Fleischer working on *Gulliver's Travels*.

Natwick summed up the experience of working for the two animation giants by saying, "They were two different people."

"Max did something so very different...Disney was a Yankee, coming from several generations of Americans. Fleischer was probably the first generation. But they [the Fleischers] were American in every sense of the word. Disney had this in-bred thing that he didn't have to think about doing something, but the Fleischers did. They accepted exactly as it was the society in which they lived. They grew up in the 'Jazz Age' and the cartoons are jazz cartoons, their comedy is typical American slapstick comedy the way it impressed them. You look at some of the Betty Boops and they are wild. They're really wild. Disney never got that wild."

Part of the vitality of the early Betty Boops may be attributed to the influx of young artists at the studio. Al Eugster told this writer that in 1930 a number of the head animators left for other employment, including vets Dick Huemer and Sid Marcus.

"The experienced animators left for elsewhere and left Max without a staff, Eugster said. He was then in-betweening along with



A 1939 caricature of Grim Natwick by animator Dan Gordon.

artists such as James "Shamus" Culhane and Willard Bowsky.

"We became instant animators with a contract," said Eugster. Despite their lack of experience, he recalled, "it worked out somehow."



Who's the Boss?

(© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

Dave Fleischer took the screen credit as director of nearly all of the Fleischer shorts through the demise of the studio in 1942. For animation fans and scholars who understand the role of a director, Fleischer's constant screen credit makes him appear an animation genius or, frankly, a liar.

The truth is that Fleischer was not a director in the same way as Chuck Jones or Tex Avery. Directors such as Jones and Avery headed their own animation units, and were responsible for working with writers on a short, overseeing the design of the characters, drawing key poses, directing the voice actors, and even animating sequences.

Fleischer acted as more of a line producer. He was more of a general supervisor of the shorts rather than the primary creative force. He did direct the voice actors in the recording schedule, and, according to ASCAP records, he also dabbled in composing some of the music for the cartoons. Fleischer's credit as director upset many people including Shamus Culhane who spoke to me in 1977.

"Well, that's a kind of sore point with me. I believe that everybody should get credit for the actual work they did. Now, Dave, although he might think himself something else, was a

gag man, and he was a good one, too. But we usually wrote our own stories. We did for a long time until Bill Turner and Stolz became regular storywriters, but even then we always wrote a good deal of the stuff. We also developed all the layouts and the characters and the animation. We did the whole shmeer.

"Dave went around during the course of the day and he'd look over your shoulder to see what you were up to, and would contribute a gag here or there. But the actual direction, I mean the whole damn thing, was done by the animators and they'd get credit only as animators."

A story on the studio in the Dec. 28, 1930 edition of the *New York Times* described the story process. "The whole thing is quite informal. Any one who is not busy at the moment drops in [Dave Fleischer's office] and takes a hand in the proceedings. A rough scenario emerges from the discussion. The cartoonists then receive their assignments, each to draw a sequence in the mad narrative."

Even after the studio began to use a separate story department, Fleischer animator and director Myron Waldman told me that he remembered getting scripts without an end, "They hadn't thought of a gimmick, yet", he said.

Waldman also told me that he became annoyed with Dave's habit of coming around at the end of the work day to flip the drawings Waldman had completed that shift. One day, Waldman put out a sheaf of blank paper, and when Dave angrily asked about it, Waldman told him that was tomorrow's work!

Perhaps the final fact to consider in the problem of Dave's directorial role is the personal relationship between Max and Dave. Fleischer family politics played an important role in the studio at key times. There was tension between Max (the eldest) and Dave (the youngest), but there was also family pressure on the brothers to stay together as a team.

I believe that Max enjoyed participating in the production of the cartoons as revealed by his continuing role as Ko-Ko's straight man in the silent shorts. When the new Fleischer Studios was set up, though, there was an arrangement that Max would handle the business end of the studio while Dave would oversee production. Dave's role apparently included the screen credit as director much to the chagrin of the real directors of the Fleischer cartoons. Max's interest in the production of the shorts, though, can be seen in his inventions, such as the table top 3-D process.



By October 1931, the familiar Betty Boop and Bimbo images had evolved as seen in this illustration from a Paramount in-house newsletter. (Courtesy Museum of Modern Art/© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)



The Birth of a Star

(© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

It took the Fleischer Studio a while to figure out what exactly to do with Grim Natwick's Helen Kane-ish singer. *Silly Scandals*, the seventh cartoon to feature Betty, illustrates how the character was definitely a second fiddle to Bimbo.

Silly Scandals (1931) is an example of what was right and wrong with the early Fleischer sound shorts. The plot involves Bimbo sneaking into a theater to see Betty perform. After she sings her number, the gags shift around a stage hypnotist. Nothing remarkable has happened in the short until the very end when Bimbo, under the spell of the hypnotist, has hallucinations

which seem to have come straight out of the psychedelic era of the 1960s!

Betty was still very much a supporting player in these shorts. Although her very next Talkartoon was a quantum leap over *Silly Scandals*, she was still just part of the punchline.

Bimbo's Initiation (1931) introduced a new Bimbo, a design that actually looked like a dog and was much more appealing than the stick figure. Here the Fleischer "looseness" served the cartoon well. There isn't really a plot; Bimbo, innocently walking the street, stumbles into a trap laid by an anxious secret fraternity who would like him to join. When he refuses, he is put through a variety of tortures and perils designed to make him change his mind. Betty is again at the punchline of the short.

Bimbo's Initiation is one of the studio's best shorts. Genuinely creepy at times with a truly surreal concept (who are these guys and why are they so insistent?), it's quite funny and very well animated. It's only marginally a Betty

Boop cartoon, though.

Betty's footage increased in *Dizzy Red Riding Hood* (1931) as she had the title role, but it was *Boop-Oop-A-Doop* (1932) in which the Boop character really started to gel. Betty is more than just an attractive accessory. While Bimbo and Ko-Ko are her co-stars, she is definitely the star of the short.

Betty plays a circus performer who is the object of unrequited affection from the ringmaster. This is one of the most openly sexual of the Boop shorts. The ringmaster corners Betty in her dressing area and rubs his hand up and down her thigh. He then tells her if she wants to keep her job she'll... and he whispers something in her ear which horrifies her. She then launches into "Don't Take my Boop-Oop-A-Doop Away."

So what is "Boop-Oop-A-Doop?" It's a meaningless word which used in the right context can inspire several risqué interpretations. Betty prevails over her unwanted suitor with the help



A Betty Boop model sheet from the early 1930s. (© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)



of Ko-Ko who receives a burning kiss as his reward.

Boop-Oop-A-Doop marks the first phase of Boop's cartoon persona. She is the sexy but innocent star in a no-holds-barred cartoon universe. Sometimes her co-stars are animals, sometimes humans, sometimes something in-between. A few of her cartoons resemble the classic silent Ko-Kos in which Betty emerges from an inkwell into the "real" world.

The next Boop cartoon was another milestone. *Minnie The Moocher* featured Cab Calloway and his big band playing one of their signature tunes. The Fleischers, with their base in New York and ties to Paramount and its Famous Music division, began using well-known singers and big bands in their Betty Boop and Screen Song cartoons. Radio stars such as Arthur Tracy, Singing Sam, Broadway

performers such as Lillian Roth and Ethel Merman, and recording artist such as the violinist Rubinoff and the Mills Brothers were among the stars featured in Fleischer shorts.

Minnie The Moocher, like *Bimbo's Initiation*, is almost plotless. Betty, living with her parents, decides to run away from home, accompanied by Bimbo. At nightfall they stay in a cave which they discover they're sharing with a variety of ghosts who launch into the title song. The lead ghost, who sings and dances, is a rotoscoped Cab Calloway.

Rotoscoping was invented by Max Fleischer in 1915 as initially a means to achieve realistic animation at a moderate cost. Live action footage would be projected onto the frosted glass surface of an animator's desk top and traced onto a cel. The results could be remarkably life-like, but the shooting of the live-action material added to

the cost of production rather than reduce it, and while Fleischer regularly used the technique, it was saved for special sequences in the shorts.

The eerie backgrounds and the macabre jokes in the cave are typical of the sense of humor of Fleischer vet Willard Bowsky who worked on 11 of the Betty Boop shorts. A significant talent at the studio who contributed much to the Popeye series, Bowsky was a controversial figure. He was among the "inner circle" of confidants surrounding the Fleischers, but had a reputation, ironically, for anti-Semitism among many of his co-workers. Bowsky died while in the military during World War II.

Calloway was delighted with the results of the short and returned to the studio twice to do more. He and his band appeared in *Snow White* (1933) and *The Old Man of the Mountain* (1933).

Lou Fleischer, who headed the music

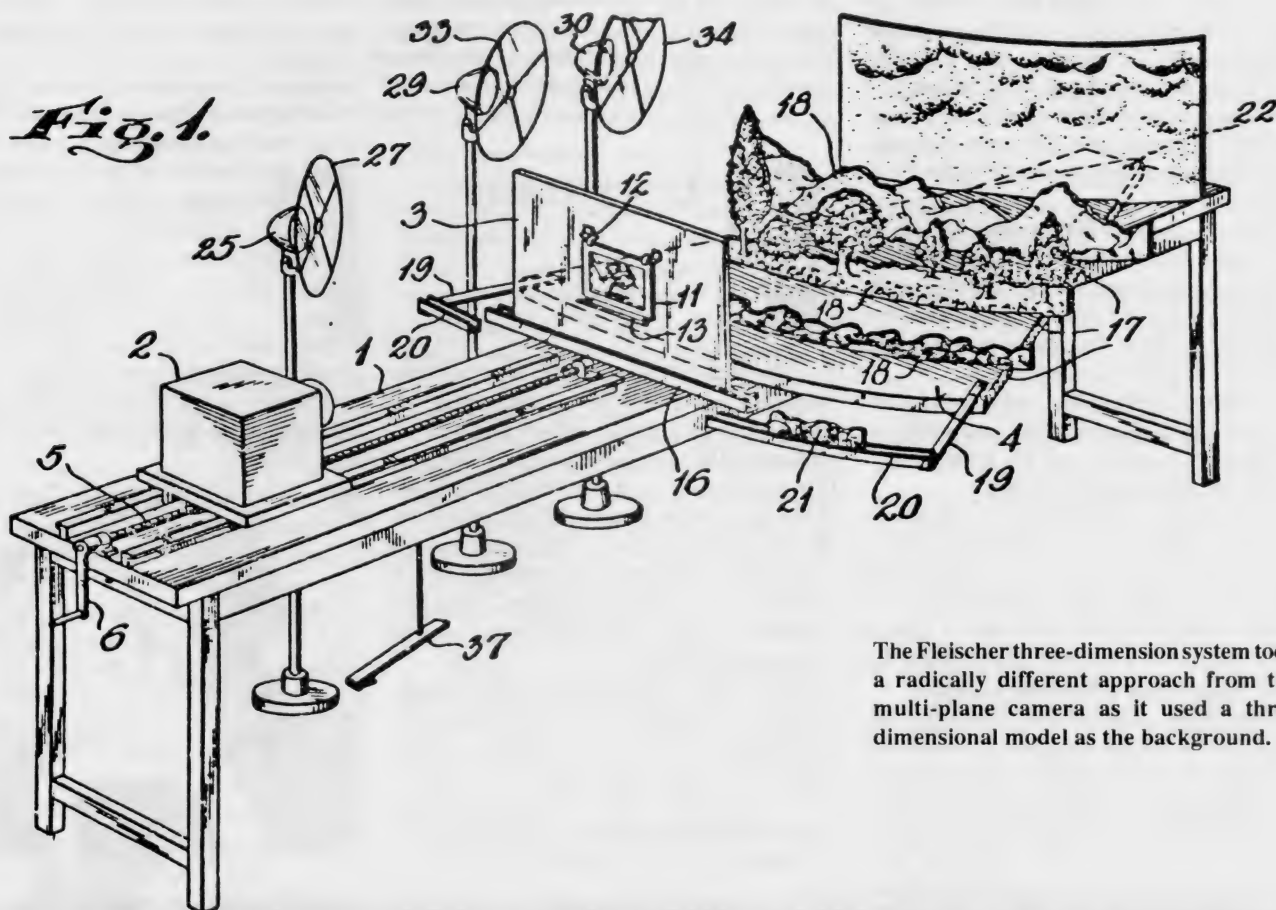
Sept. 15, 1936.

M. FLEISCHER

2,054,414

ART OF MAKING MOTION PICTURE CARTOONS

Filed Nov. 2, 1933



The Fleischer three-dimension system took a radically different approach from the multi-plane camera as it used a three dimensional model as the background.



department at the studio, told animation historian Ray Pointer about Calloway's reaction to the shorts.

"When Cab saw this [his cartoon form] he screamed in laughter and stretched himself out on the floor!...Some months later I met Cab Calloway and asked, 'Did our cartoon help or hurt your show when it went on the road?' He said, 'Are you kidding? We had your cartoon shown the week before we arrived at every theater, and on its account none of the of the houses could accommodate the crowds that came. Are you kidding?'"

Jazz legend Louis Armstrong appeared with Betty in *I'll be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal You* (1932). The Armstrong band not only performed for the soundtrack, but Armstrong was transformed into a cannibal in this less-than politically correct cartoon.



Innovation

(© King Features
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The early Betty Boops also exhibited the kind of experimentation that was fairly common in the silent Ko-Ko cartoons. Max Fleischer incorporated the blending of animation and live action, the animation of photographs, and model and clay animation into his silent cartoons. Some of these techniques were used in the Betty Boops.

In *Chess-Nuts* (1932), the short opens with two middle-aged men playing a game of chess and studying the board intently. The shot shifts to the board itself where the pieces move by themselves before the three dimensional animation switches to cel animation.

Animated photographs were featured in *Ha! Ha! Ha!* (1934) when Betty, attempting to play dentist for Ko-Ko and his aching tooth, releases laughing gas into the city.

A great use of the Fleischer rotoscope process was in *Betty Boop's Bamboo Isle* (1932), in which the Polynesian musical group The Royal Samoans performed. The male dancers were rotoscoped for one scene and a female dancer performed a hula that was the basis for one of Betty's most memorable moments.

Betty Boop's Rise to Fame (1934) was a bit of cheat as it used the cost-cutting measure of recycled animation from older cartoons, but the cartoon is really a delight. A reporter visits the Fleischer studio to write a story about Betty and Max Fleischer draws the character who obligingly recreates scenes from some of the

earlier triumphs. The short features some accomplished blending of live action and animation, staples of the the studio's silent shorts.

This cartoon marked the last appearance of Max Fleischer in a cartoon he produced, and the short has a decidedly nostalgic tone to it. Fleischer had appeared in many of the silent Ko-Ko cartoons, and while he certainly wasn't a great actor, he was a game one who was obviously willing to do nearly anything for a laugh.

In 1934, the studio produced its own Betty Boop color short, *Poor Cinderella*. Since the superior Technicolor process was contractually unavailable to the studio, the staff used Cinecolor, a two-color process that used red and blue. The result is not very satisfactory as the color process has a limited palette and the cartoon seems stiff and self-conscious.

Poor Cinderella used the 3-D process developed by Max Fleischer. Unlike the multi-plane camera system developed by Ub Iwerks, Fleischer's approach was literally three dimensional. He developed a system in which a background model was built on a revolving turntable. The animation cels were photographed in front of the background model which was turned to match the movement in the animation. The results could be spectacular. *Betty Boop and the Little King* (1936) has some great 3-D sequences as does *House Cleaning Blues* (1937).



Crazytown

(© King Features
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The humor of the Boop shorts was definitely "anything goes." The Boop shorts could be cutesy and cynical all within a matter of moments. In *Mother Goose Land* (1933), Mother Goose comes alive and takes Betty to meet the characters from her nursery rhymes. As she and Mother Goose are flying off Betty's house says goodbye and tells her not to worry because it will keep "the home fires burning." With that statement, flames envelop the house, and it burns to the ground!

The Fleischer artists loved surreal "cartoony" images. A great example is the conclusion of *Betty Boop's May Party* (1933) when an elephant accidentally taps a rubber tree, spraying the entire area with sap which gives everything the ability to stretch and bounce like rubber. The resulting animation is a lot of fun.

The American cinema before 1934 was a time when film makers constantly pushed the envelope on adult themes. The Fleischers took advantage, as did several other animation producers, to give their cartoons the same kind of openness. The result are cartoons that seem delightfully naughty today. They maintain an innocence that keeps them from appearing to be simply pandering towards cheap laughs.

Viewed today the Boop cartoons before 1934 were seldom politically correct. There is ethnic humor which could be considered offensive today. There are jokes about homosexuals which also could provoke some controversy. Then, there is sex.

If the Fleischer animators could think of nothing else in these shorts, they would toss in a gratuitous underwear scene. While Betty's standard costume looked as if she wasn't wearing a bra, Depression audiences knew she did because they saw it often enough!

In *The Old Man of the Mountain* (1933), the sight of Betty's figure alone cured one lame old man. In the same cartoon, Betty asks a weeping woman pushing a baby carriage what was wrong. The woman showed her three bearded babies and replied "The Old Man of the Mountain!"

In *Betty Boop's Big Boss* (1933), Betty uses her charm to get a job, and then fights off the unwelcome advances from her boss. When she is rescued, she decides the boss is not so bad!

Betty's antics did get her into trouble. There is one often-repeated story in which the Hays Office, responsible for the self-censorship of the film industry, allegedly ordered Max Fleischer to remove Betty's garter, but letters from outraged fans brought it back. While I've not been able to confirm this incident, one Betty Boop short was definitely banned in Great Britain. *Red Hot Mama* (1934) has Betty literally freezing Hell over with her disapproving look. British censors found this comic depiction of damnation to be too blasphemous to show in their country!





An illustration from the Betty Boop Big Little book, *Miss Gulliver's Travels* (1935). Although Betty Boop merchandise was produced, Max Fleischer did not view it with any importance as Myron Waldman told this writer. The first major merchandising push for any Fleischer production was with *Gulliver's Travels* in 1939. (© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

Times Change

(© King Features
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Studios, Inc.)



The installation and enforcement of the Production Code had a major impact on the Boop shorts. By 1934, there were calls from some people that movies had gone too far and that government censorship was necessary. In many parts of the country there were already state and municipal censorship boards, and the film industry wanted to prevent the establishment of a federal board. Will Hays, the supposed morals watchdog for the movies, hired Joseph Breen to enforce a new tough content code for motion pictures that detailed what was acceptable and what wasn't. A film could not be released from one of the mainstream Hollywood distributors without the Production Code seal of approval. Not until 1953 and the unsanctioned release of *The Moon Is Blue* did the strangle grip of the Breen Office begin to loosen.

The Boop cartoons began to change to

meet the new standards and the change in the taste of the movie audiences. The cartoons were more polished and the Boop universe was more defined. Gone was the inkwell and references to Uncle Max. Gone was her trademark short skirt. Gone were Ko-Ko and Bimbo. Betty had a re-occurring boy friend, Freddie, a younger brother, a grandfather, and a dog. In many cartoons, she was portrayed as a working girl with a career far from show business. There was greater emphasis on the gags coming from the character or the story rather than just being inserted into the cartoon.

Popeye the Sailor had made his cartoon debut in what was technically a Betty Boop cartoon, and now in the post-1934 period, several other King

Features characters would do the same.

Betty Boop with Henry, The Funniest Living American (1935) is less than successful. The Henry character, a long-standing fixture of many newspaper comic pages, was a pantomime character that was strictly gag-driven with little or no personality. The highly stylized design of the character (supposedly a little boy with no hair, an odd nose and no mouth) was not attractive in animation.

The studio fared better with its next effort *Betty Boop and the Little King* (1936). Otto Soglow's comic strip had a little more substance than Henry and the character had already been featured in a series of cartoons produced by the Van Buren Studio. This short, featuring the Little King sneaking out of the opera to watch Betty's vaudeville act, is a delight.

The last of the comic strip try-outs came with *Betty Boop and Little Jimmy*. Jimmy Swinnerton was one of the true pioneering geniuses of the American comic strip, but this cartoon didn't capture the themes or the graphics of the original.

For some modern fans, the post 1934 Boop cartoons are too tame. Although the studio was definitely re-defining the character, there are

many gems, which wisely use the Grampy and Pudgy characters.

Betty Boop and Grampy (1935) introduced the new character whom one can assume is actually Betty's grandfather. Grampy is an inventor, and considering Max Fleischer's interests, a perfectly logical character to come out of his studio. When in a spot, Grampy whips out his thinking cap (a mortarboard with a light bulb) and invents a solution with whatever materials are handy. Other good Grampy shorts include *Be Human*, *House Cleaning Blues*, *Grampy's Indoor Outing*. Grampy was featured without Betty in the sentimental favorite *Christmas Comes But Once a Year*.

Pudgy, Betty Boop's dog, was designed by Myron Waldman to give the series more story potential and made his debut in 1934 with *Betty Boop's Little Pal*. The addition of the little dog gave the series more potential for sentiment. Waldman called them "ooh, ahh pictures" because of the reactions of the audiences. Pudgy could also put over a gag, and wound up being the real star of a good number of the post-1934 cartoons. One of the best was *Not Now*, in which Pudgy fights a cat which scratches him. Pudgy touches his wound, looks at the camera and says "He pulled a knife on me!"

While Grampy and Pudgy could be amusing, another character who periodically made visits to the Boop series was simply odd. Wiffle Piffle was a bug-eyed little guy with an amusing flapping arm walk that looked like he was trying to fly. Jack Mercer provided the voice, and the only characterization one could determine about Wiffle is that he had a habit of screwing things up. Wiffle Piffle made frequent appearances in the *Screen Song* series, also.

The Fleischers had taken the same road as Walt Disney had done when Mickey Mouse was seeming to run out of steam. Just like Disney added Goofy and Donald Duck, the Fleischers had added Grampy and Pudgy. In some of the post-1934 Boop shorts, Betty is only marginally involved with the lion's share of the footage devoted to her co-stars. The issue of longevity was addressed in a New York Times piece from Feb. 13, 1936. Bosley Crowther, writing about the growing animation industry, interviewed Sam Buchwald of the studio management.

"But an interesting thing about it [the animation industry] says Mr. Buchwald is the way that the familiar cartoon characters rise, have their day of great popularity, and then wane just as real stars do. Although Disney doesn't say much about it, his lovable Mickey, greatest animated character of all time, is definitely on the way out. And where are Koko

the Clown, Mutt and Jeff and other of those favorites of a bygone era?

"Popeye and Betty Boop (the latter an original film creation and the other a recruit from the newspaper comic strips) have been doing quite well for about six years, but it takes imagination to keep them alive. Betty Boop is constantly undergoing imperceptible changes in size, hair, dress and such and is paradoxically growing younger in appearance, Mr. Buchwald confesses. But after all why shouldn't she? The essence of the animated cartoon's charm - the universality of its appeal - undoubtedly lies in its accomplishment of the utterly impossible."



(© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

Exit and Entrance

Buchwald's words were prophetic. The Boop cartoons were running out of gas, and the series was terminated in the summer of 1939. It was a new era at the Fleischer Studios with Max moving his operation to the Miami, Florida area and a brand new studio, and perhaps Betty was just not part of it.

In the summer of 1942, the Fleischer Studio was closed when a business strategy developed by Max to insure control of his business failed. Paramount Pictures, which had lent Fleischer money for his new studio, took control of the studio, re-named it and moved it back to New York City. The Fleischers, like Betty, were now part of animation history.

When Paramount sold a number of its cartoons for television distribution in the mid-1950s, Max Fleischer's name was blocked out on the 16mm prints used by the television stations. Fleischer sued Paramount, and through the legal action was able to acquire the rights to the Betty Boop characters. This did Fleischer little good during his lifetime as he died in 1972, a few years before the Betty Boop revival began.



Myron Waldman's Pudgy carried many of the latter Betty Boops. (© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

In the mid-1970s, a film distributor named Sidney Tager put together two theatrical compilations of Betty Boop, Screen Song and Talkartoons shorts. Although booked only at art houses and revival theaters, the two features drew attention to the character and to the Fleischer Studio. A modest merchandising effort followed in the late 1970s.



(© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

Everything Old Is New Again

While the merchandising revival of Betty Boop began to soar in the early 1980s, an effort to revive the economic worth of the cartoons began. National Telefilm Associates, a long-time supplier of television programming had bought the rights of a number of Fleischer productions from Paramount. The NTA holdings included both Fleischer features, a number of Screen Song cartoons and the Betty Boops.

NTA had successfully sold syndication

packages of these shorts throughout the 1950s and '60s, but in the late 1960s and early '70s, the bias against black and white programming was beginning to manifest itself at local stations. The solution? Colorize the Betty Boop shorts.

The Boop shorts were not among the first to undergo the transformation to color. Broadcast executive Eliot Hyman had been at Warner Brothers/Seven Arts when he oversaw the colorization of early Looney Tunes. He then colorized 18 Krazy Kat shorts for Columbia. His company, Feature House, then tackled converting 100 Boop cartoons to color in 1972.

Basically, Hyman had the Boop shorts re-animated with color cels. In Asian animation studios, artists would project the black and white cartoons onto a frosted

glass drawing board, trace the action onto a new cel, paint it, and photograph it.

There were problems with the process. To save money, not every frame was re-animated resulting in less-than full animation. The marvelous black and white backgrounds, in such cartoons as *Minnie the Moocher*, were not reproduced in color, and were eliminated in favor of less complex background. Finally, the color selection was often-times poor. Granted the Fleischer shorts were often surreal, but I doubt anyone at the studio would have selected purple for the color of a cat!

These colorized cartoons became the basis for an odd compilation film released by New Line Cinema in 1980. Record producer and composer Dan Dalton was approached in 1976 by NTA to create a "new" animated feature from the colorized Boop shorts that would be released in August of that year. The idea was to create a new storyline that would be supported by classic Fleischer animation and a new voice and music track. The theme of the feature would capitalize on the 1976 presidential race.

Dalton spoke to me in 1982, and confessed that the selection of the cartoon sequences and the creation of a new story took him much longer than he had expected. "I knew I was going to start with *Minnie the Moocher* [the

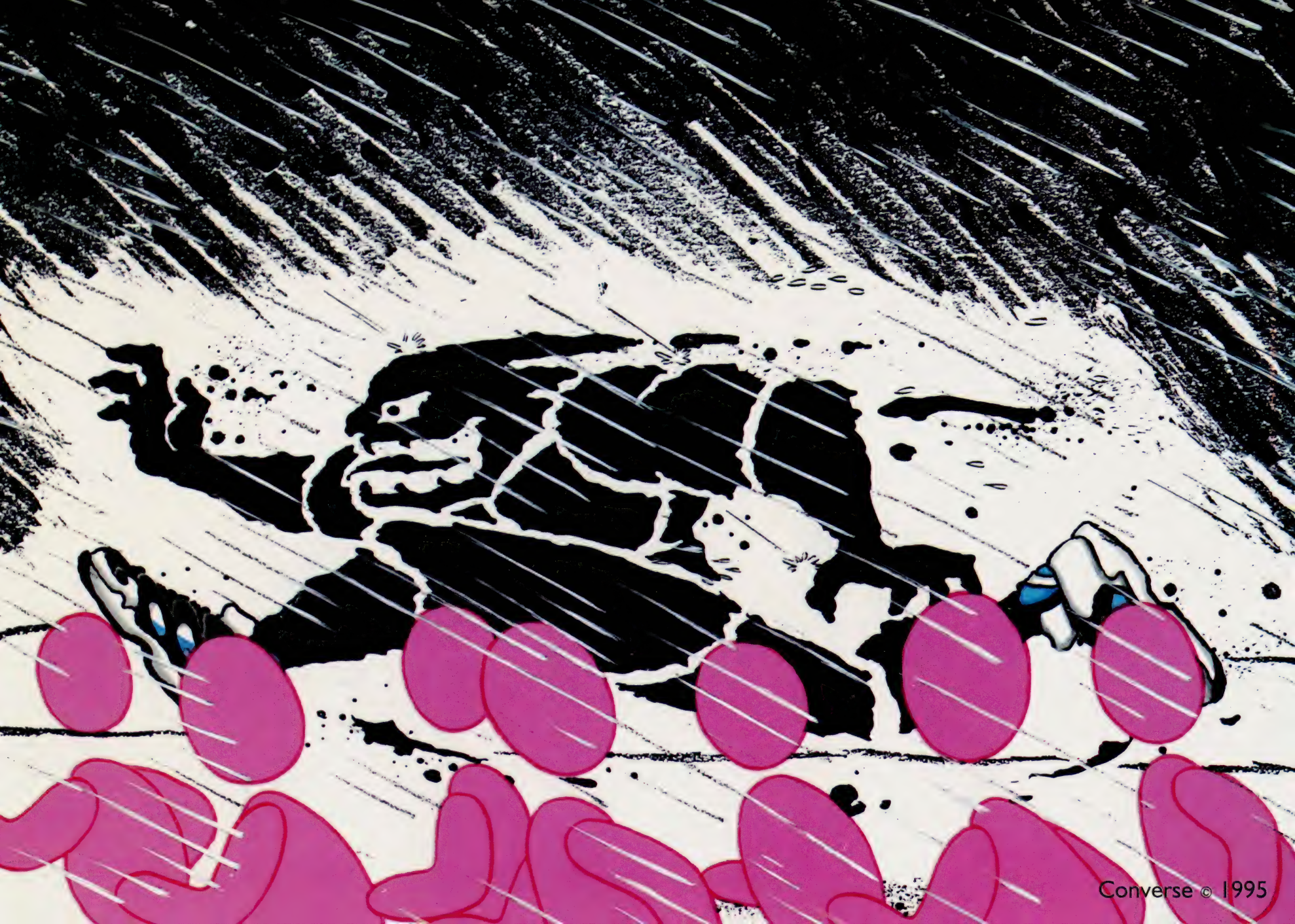
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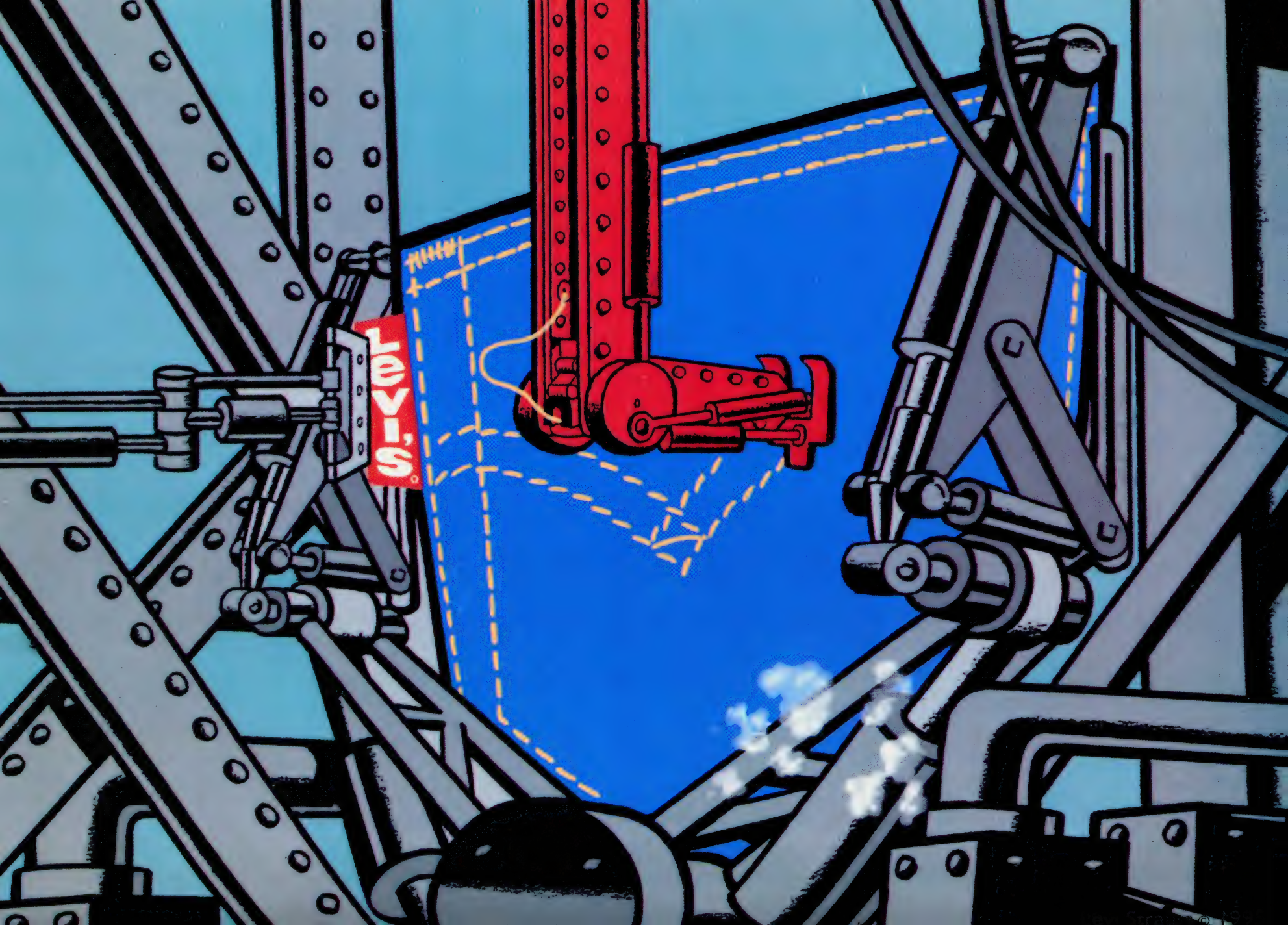
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The trade ad in *Variety* announcing the Betty Boop compilation feature which eventually was released as *Hurray for Betty Boop*.
(© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

scene in which Betty is admonished by her father] and would end with *Betty Boop for President*," said Dalton. His problem was finding a suitable middle for his narrative.

Dalton kept some of the classic Cab Calloway numbers, but junked the 1930s scores for his original songs which were recorded by Debbie Boone, *The Association* and the singer hired to be the new voice of Betty Boop, Victoria D'Orazi. Working with four other writers, Dalton took scenes from 35 shorts to create his story which depended on a narrator. Tom Smothers did the honors as the voice of Pudgy.

Dalton missed his 1976 deadline. Apparently NTA was anxious to release the film as they advertised an "all singing, all dancing feature length production" called *Betty Baby* in the Oct. 19, 1977 edition of *Variety*. That incarnation of the film was apparently not released in November of that year as promised.

Hurray for Betty Boop finally surfaced in

1980 at the Cannes Film Festival (not in competition) and had two trade screenings in the hopes of attracting world-wide sales.

According to Dalton, the production had a budget of \$300,000 which included promotion and a test marketing in the college town of Madison, WI. Dalton blamed the timing of the booking, (Labor Day weekend), but what few fans saw the finished product weren't impressed.

"Everyone said I couldn't do it and keep the continuity, it was very difficult. You and I could notice things [changes in styles of drawing Betty, her costumes and size] and not others [general audiences]," said Dalton.

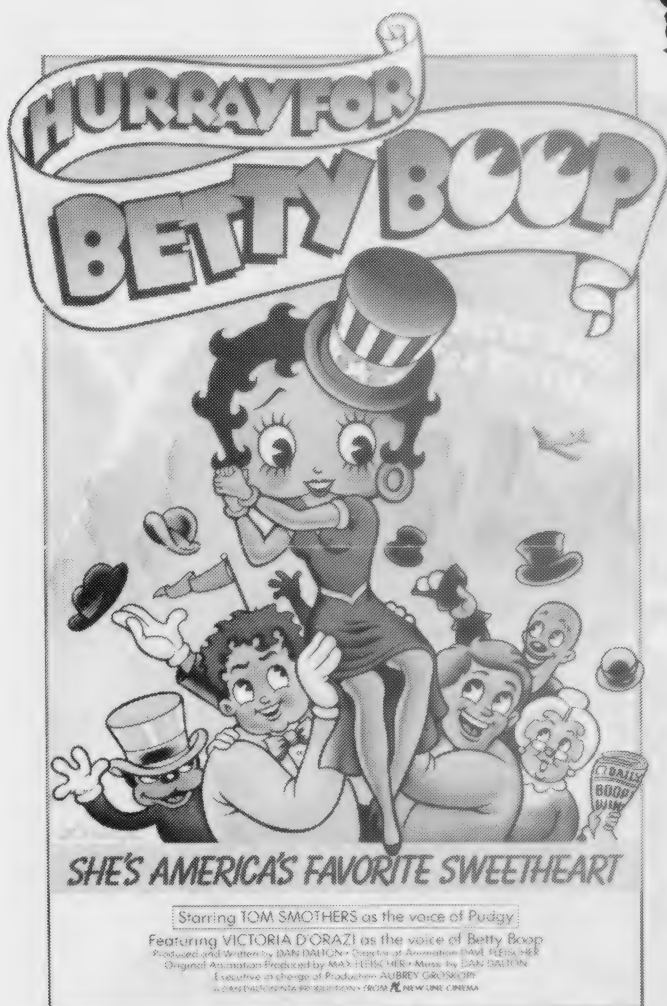
Despite the lack of critical acclaim, Dalton was very proud of his film. "It's a great children's movie, a great dopers' movie, a great midnight movie."

The film went to cable television and on video where it can easily be found in larger video outlets today. Dalton, at the time of our

conversation, reported that NTA was then thinking about re-doing *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* by dumping the soundtrack and coming up with new dialogue and a rock and roll score. Those plans never came to completion thanks to the failure of *Hurray for Betty Boop*.

Perhaps part of the problem with *Hurray for Betty Boop* was that people had seen the real Betty Boops on video and liked them. The Fleischer cartoons became very successful on the exploding home video market. NTA, and its corporate successor Republic Pictures, marketed a wide assortment of Fleischer shorts. Because a number of Fleischer cartoons had fallen into the public domain, there was a seemingly endless parade of "bargain" tapes featuring the same handful of Boop cartoons.

Another revival of the character that never got off the ground in the 1970s involved Sid and Marty Krofft (the then-hot producers of such children's fare as *H.R. Puffnstuff* and *Lidsville*).



The poster for *Hurray for Betty Boop*. (© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

Richard Fleischer (Max's son and well-known film director) told me they wanted to produce a live-action Boopshow that would star Bette Midler. While being a fantastic performer, Midler doesn't have the voice or the features to create a living Betty Boop. Considering the cheap self-conscious camp that characterized their shows, this writer, at least is glad this version of the character never made it to the screen.

In the early 1980s, The Columbia Broadcasting System had formed a division to produce theatrical films and had optioned rights to Betty Boop. In a 1982 advertising supplement to *Variety*, the company announced their slate of up-coming films and listed under "In Development" was a live-action *Betty Boop* to be produced by Norman Stephens, Barry Krost and Joan Scott. Nothing else was ever announced on the project.

In 1983, plans were announced that CBS would

bankroll a Broadway musical based on the character, apparently in response to the success of *Annie*. Those plans never progressed either.

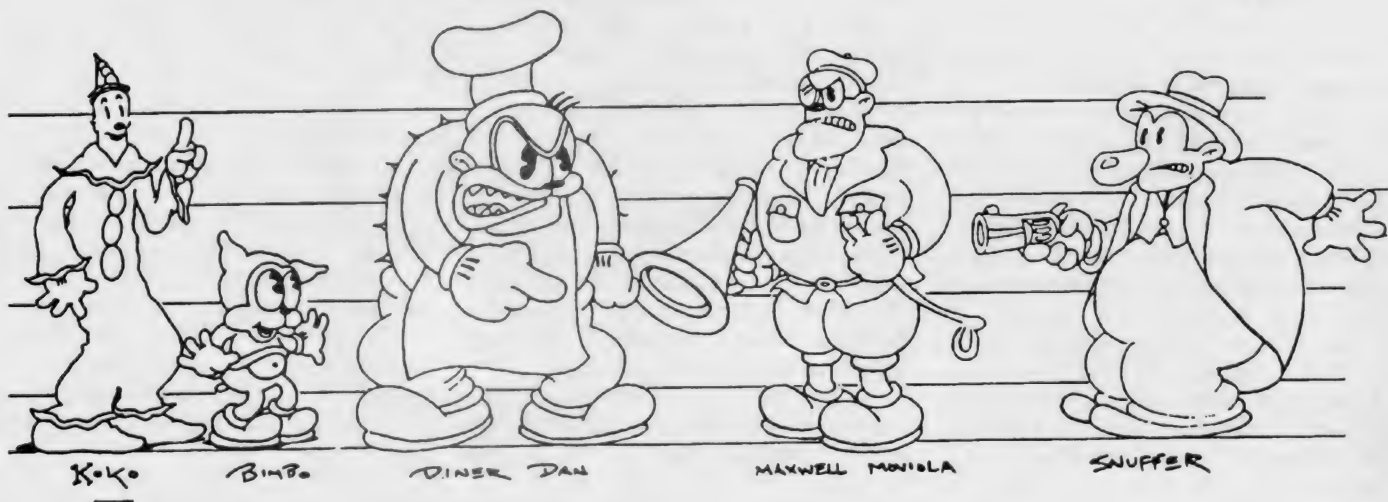
CBS finally did use the character in a half-hour animated television special in 1985. *The Romance of Betty Boop* was produced by the same team who animated the hugely popular *Peanuts* specials, Lee Mendelson and Bill Melendez.

Mendelson, interviewed by UPI's Vernon Scott, said, "I predict Betty will make a comeback like Tina Turner. She's a good representative if the women's movement today. Betty wants to settle down, but she wants a career, too. She's a female paradox."

In an interview I conducted with Melendez in 1982, he commented that he planned to animate the character better than the Fleischer artists ever had, and that unlike the original shorts, his half-hour would have a story. He told me that he had no plans to hire any of the original animators who had worked on the shorts, nor would he consider using Mae Questel.

When the half-hour aired over two years after that conversation, it was relatively easy to see that while the special was competently animated, there was no "feel" for the subject matter. The contempt Melendez exhibited in our discussion for the Fleischer originals was quite apparent. Although he followed the traditional Betty model, the supporting characters were of a different design which clashed with Betty. And indeed there was a story, but it was unremarkable.

The fact the special never was repeated nor was there a sequel clearly indicated the



A model sheet from *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*. (© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)



program's lack of success.

The failure of *Hurray for Betty Boop* and *The Romance of Betty Boop* didn't put a brake on the merchandising success of the character.

In an Associated Press story from 1986, King Features Syndicate, which administers the licensing of the character for Richard Fleischer and his sister Ruth Kneitel, reported that in the fiscal year 1985-86 three hundred licensed Boop products grossed "about \$100 million."

In 1984, King Features syndicated a new Betty Boop comic strip which co-starred Felix the Cat written and drawn by Brian, Morgan, Greg, and Neal Walker. It was not a success.

Betty did make a return to the big screen, though, in an appearance in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* in 1988. The animation directed by Richard Williams perfectly captured the classic Fleischer look, and Betty is well cast as a cigarette girl in the nightclub where Jessica Rabbit is performing. Mae Questel reprised her vocal characterization, and the Boopster was the only classic cartoon star in the film presented in black and white.

In the late 1980s, Betty began appearing in

the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade in the form of a huge balloon.

With all of the interest in the character a new animated television show was commissioned by King Features in 1990. San Francisco-based Colossal Pictures produced a half-hour special entitled *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*. Unlike the Melendez special, Colossal wisely recreated much of the look and feel of the Fleischer originals. George Evelyn, the show's director, told this writer that the production company wanted to re-create the Fleischer look and did so in part with the help of Richard Fleischer who supplied materials from the family archives.

Evelyn had wanted to use Mae Questel for Betty's voice, but the actress was busy filming Woody Allen's segment of *New York Stories*. Evelyn launched a series of auditions, and in true "Hollywood" fashion, the secretary at the recording studio which was producing copies of the audition tapes had the voice Evelyn wanted. Melissa Fahn performed the Boop voice.

Although originally intended for broadcast over CBS, the special was never aired until it picked up by the Disney cable channel. Evelyn

explained that a new management team at the network decided to shelve the special. Most animation fans have never had the opportunity of seeing what is commonly agreed to be a production of which the Fleischers themselves would be proud.

In the past several years, Richard Fleischer has announced plans to produce a new animated Betty Boop feature. Those plans have apparently been put on-hold, but with the continuing popularity of the cartoon diva, one can be fairly certain that an old trouser like Betty will be performing once again.



G. Michael Dobbs is the editor of *ANIMATO!*. He has been researching the Fleischer Studios since 1977, and wishes to acknowledge and thank Myron Waldman, Richard Fleischer, Ruth Kneitel, Al Eugster, the late Grim Natwick, Shamus Culhane, Mae Questel, Pat Timberg, Ray Pointer, Mark Langer, Bill Melendez, Karl Cohen, George Evelyn, Ron Magliozzi of the Museum of Modern Art, and Dan Dalton for their help.

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Helen Kane: Inspiration Behind Betty Boop

Animation fans know of the story that artist Grim Natwick was given sheet music with Helen Kane's photo on it in order to create the character that would become Betty Boop, but few are aware of just who was Helen Kane.

Kane, who died in 1966 at the age of 62, enjoys an ironic form of immortality. Her features and style of singing are definitely caricatured by the Boop character, but relatively few people alive today are aware of it. For any performer that kind of twisted anonymity is a mixed blessing.

At the time of Betty's birth in 1930, Kane was a successful stage and recording star. With her round face, spit curls and a pouty little girl singing voice, she projected a curious blend of sexual knowingness and innocence. She was, like actresses Clara Bow and Joan Crawford, a "jazz baby."

She began her performing career at the age of 15, and eventually reached the top of the vaudeville ranks earning as much as \$8,000.00 a week. She became known for the songs "That's My Weakness Now" and "I Wanna be Loved By You."

At the time of the production of *Dizzy Dishes*, Kane was well-known for her distinctive kewpie doll looks and high-pitched singing voice. Ironically, Natwick's caricature of her in *Dizzy Dishes* is not all that apparent until the unnamed night club performer sings. After all, the prototype Betty Boop was a dog (literally) with long ears, and did not have the familiar Boop construction of large head and small well-proportioned body. Kane's trademark was a scat-sing chorus of "boop-oop-a-doop," which was included in the cartoon performance.

While it's not known whether Kane initially objected to her cartoon doppelganger, it may be assumed that her pride, if injured, was healed by her own debut in motion pictures, many of them at Paramount. In all, Kane appeared in nine



Helen Kane as she appeared in the Paramount college comedy *Sweetie* (1929).

films, including one of the *Hollywood on Parade* two-reelers. In this short, set in a Hollywood wax museum, Kane plays the Betty Boop statue come-to-life and is attacked by the Dracula statue played by Bela Lugosi himself! Lugosi has the memorable line "You have booped your last boop!"

Kane's time in the spotlight was waning by the mid-1930s though, while Betty Boop's career was flying high. Perhaps that is what motivated her lawsuit against Max Fleischer and Paramount in 1934.

Kane sued for unfair competition and imitation and sought the amount of \$250,000.00. The trial began in April and concluded in May.

At the heart of the argument was just how much of the success of the Betty Boop cartoons could be traced to the spit curls and singing style of Helen Kane. While it's clear that Kane's performing style and appearance were indeed used for the inspiration of the Betty Boop character, the question remains if those aspects of Boop's character were solely responsible for the success of the cartoons. One can easily argue that what made Betty Boop popular transcended a mere imitation of a popular singer.

Max Fleischer testified that Boop was a figment of his imagination and that he developed the trademark spit curls. Fleischer had a lot to lose if Kane won the case, and his testimony was an effort to keep the lucrative Betty Boop character and to prevent further actions by Kane.

The judge hearing the case watched a number of Betty Boop cartoons and shorts, and saw a film of a blues singer named Baby Esther who used a variation of the "boop" chorus in her performances. Her manager testified that Kane and her manager had seen his client perform in 1928. The implication was clear; Kane's trademark was

not her's and her's alone.

The decision was handed down on May 5, 1934. Kane's suit was denied on the basis that "the plaintiff had failed to sustain either cause of action by proof of sufficient probative action." Kane and her attorney vowed to file an appeal, but never did.

In a 1935 interview, Kane said she was quitting show business because she was tired. Kane had amassed a considerable fortune during the peak of her fame, and, after fading from the public eye, invested in several businesses. Unfortunately, her investments failed, and Kane

Continued on Page 70



Mae Questel: Betty's Voice

No one person has been associated as much with Betty Boop as the character's primary voice artist, Mae Questel. Although several performers voiced the character before Questel, her's is the rendition that stuck with the Fleischer Studios and with the public.

Questel attempted to begin her professional show business career at the age of nine when she auditioned for the Broadway show, *Daddy*. Although the producers liked her, her grandparents didn't believe the theater was a proper career for a young woman, and Questel's show business aspirations were put on hold for a few years.

In 1930, her high school sorority sisters entered her name into a Helen Kane impersonation contest. Questel won the contest which meant four days booking into one of the leading vaudeville houses in New York, the RKO Fordham and \$150.00 in prize money. Helen Kane even autographed a photo "To Another Helen Kane." Neither performer could imagine how ironic this inscription would become in just a few years.

Her four days at the Fordham resulted in bookings in the prestigious Palace theater and then subsequent bookings from Boston to Baltimore. At the relatively tender age of 18, Questel began her show business career with an act consisting of impersonations of well-known performers such as Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, Eddie Cantor and Jimmy Durante, among others.

Max Fleischer hired her in 1931 to perform the Betty Boop voice, an assignment she had through the end of the series in 1938. Questel told this writer that she didn't want to move to Florida with the rest of the Fleischer studio, and by that time the Betty Boop series had naturally run its course.

A short brunette with large eyes, Questel bore an amazing resemblance to La Boopster.

Questel's mimicry extended to her characterization of Olive Oyl in the Popeye cartoons. Although at first the Olive voice was a deeper voice, Questel's version was based on popular screen comedienne ZaSu Pitts.

Unlike her frequent partner behind the microphone, Jack Mercer, Questel worked hard to have an acting career in front of the camera. She appeared in several Paramount musical two-reelers with Rudy Valle in the early 1930s and in the film *Wayward* supporting Richard Arlen and Nancy Carroll (1932). She retired from show business in the late 1930s for three years after the birth of her son.

She returned to voice acting with numerous appearances on radio programs during the 1940s and essaying Olive Oyl and other cartoon voices when Paramount moved the Famous Studios operation back to New York in 1942. She worked on the Casper cartoons and was the voice of Little Audrey. According to Jackson Beck, who played Bluto at Famous, Questel even played Popeye in several shorts made during World War II when Jack Mercer was unavailable.

She provided the voice for the television character Winky Dink on the show *Winky Dink and You*, and did scores of voice-overs for commercials. And at an age when performers worry about making the transition to older parts, Questel had no problem with character roles. In 1960, she was praised for her role in the Broadway hit *Majority of One*, and encored her performance for the movie version starring

Rosalind Russell. Other Broadway roles came in *Enter Laughing* with Alan Arkin, *Bajour* with Chita Rivera and *Come Blow Your Horn*. She had prominent parts in Jerry Lewis' *It's Only Money*, *Funny Girl* and *Move*. Her television appearances included guest shots on series such as *Mrs. G Goes to College*, *The Naked City* and *77 Sunset Strip*.

Questel even starred on her own comedy record in the early 1970s. *Mrs. Portnoy's Retort* was a satiric response to Philip Roth's bestselling book *Portnoy's Complaint*. Roth's book was lauded for its candid depiction of obsessive masturbation, and the album took full advantage of this theme for a series of cheap laughs with Questel playing the role of the fictional Portnoy's mother.

In the mid-1970s Questel was picked for the role of "Aunt Bluebell" in a series of commercials for Scott Towels, and was a fixture on television for years.

I've talked to Questel several times since 1977 when I began my research at the Fleischer Studio and always found her to be bubbly, out-



A caricature of Mae Questel appearing on a promotional booklet. (Courtesy Mae Questel)

spoken, and self-confident. Her character of Aunt Bluebell, who would butt into other people's problems with her unsolicited but friendly advice about paper towels, never seemed to me to be too far from reality. She wasn't too happy that she wasn't selected for Hanna-Barbera's revival of Popeye, and was quoted by her son in a 1977 article that she was always hoping to get a telephone call from someone making more Betty Boops. She finally did get a chance to do Betty again in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

Questel's last performance of note was in Woody Allen's segment, "Oedipus Wrecks", of the 1989 anthology film *New York Stories*. Although the film as a whole received mixed notices, Questel's performance was singled out for praise.

In poor health for a number of years, Questel lived to see and benefit from the rediscovery of Betty Boop.





Sammy Timberg: From Tin Pan Alley to Animation Cel



Sammy Timberg (Courtesy Patricia Timberg)

If you've ever whistled "It's A Hap-Hap-Happy Day," chances are you're a Sammy Timberg fan and you didn't even know it.

The late composer was the most important of the several tunesmiths used by the Fleischer Studio to compose music and songs for the Popeye and Betty Boop cartoons, and other productions. Thanks to the efforts of his daughter Pat, he is beginning to receive the attention being afforded to fellow cartoon composers Carl Stalling and Scott Brady.

Timberg's contributions to the Fleischer Studio productions reads like a cartoon Top Forty list. His works included the "Sweet Betty" theme song heard to introduce the Betty Boop shorts; the biggest hit from *Gulliver's Travels*, "It's a Hap Hap Happy Day"; "Don't Take my Boop-Oop-A-Doop Away"; "I'm Sinbad the Sailor"; "Boy Oh Boy" from *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* and many others.

Timberg received an opportunity which Stalling and Brady never got at Warner Brothers and MGM. He composed all the music for the Fleischer Superman cartoons which enabled him to show a wider and more dramatic range of his musical abilities.

In a brief interview in 1977, Timberg told this writer that his favorite assignment at the studio was composing for the Betty Boop shorts. His contributions to the shorts were integral to their success. Since many of the Betty Boop shorts have show biz settings or references, Timberg's classic Tin Pan Alley pop compositions were always on target. He also contributed greatly to the incidental music of the shorts as revealed by the cartoons musical cue sheets maintained by ASCAP.

Timberg obviously understood the intent of the animators and knew his characters. Some of his music provides a structure for the short, such as the great "I Want A Clean Shaven Man" in the Popeye

cartoon of the same name. Other songs set the stage for the action of the short such as the song Popeye sings about looking for his father at the beginning of *Goonland*.

"The music had to be synchronized with the action, and I worked with the artists from the first drawings up to the end," Timberg told one interviewer.

His compositions for the Superman shorts perfectly match the animation as being one of the true highpoints in American animation. The Superman shorts easily prove that Timberg had the talent to score dramatic films.

Timberg had aspirations beyond his success in cartoons. His daughter Pat says that her father never saw the value in that work and instead sought fame as a composer of hit popular songs and "serious" music. Considering that he had a classical music education with a teacher whose students included Aaron Copeland and George Gershwin and the lack of critical attention animated cartoons received in the 1930s and '40s, it's little wonder Timberg favored other projects.

One only has to look at what Timberg was doing prior to his start at the Fleischer Studio. In 1930, he led a 100-piece orchestra at New York's Capital Theater in performing his jazz rhapsody.

Listening to Pat speak about her father and his life is not unlike reading the plot of an old "behind-the-scenes of a show" musical.

Timberg was born in New York City on May 21, 1903, the youngest of seven children of Austrian immigrants. The death of his father forced the 15 year-old to abandon his training as a concert pianist and join his brother Herman in vaudeville.

Herman Timberg was an up-and-coming comedian, and Sammy was his straight man. A legend in vaudeville, Herman wrote one of the Marx Brothers' early acts while Sammy provided the music for it, and their sister Hattie performed with them and acted as the Marx's business manager.

After 14 years on the vaudeville circuit,



Timberg decided to devote himself to his music. He wrote songs for several Broadway shows, and then found work with the Fleischer Studios. His music can be heard on dozens of Fleischer shorts and on several of the live-action musical comedy shorts produced by Paramount in New York featuring singer Rudy Valle. His association with animation lasted through the end of the Fleischer Studios and continued with the Famous Studios where he composed music for Little Lulu and Casper cartoons.

While essentially a New Yorker, Timberg ventured out to Hollywood on several memorable occasions. In the 1940s, the great dramatic actor Lionel Barrymore chose Timberg to compose the score for a

recording of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Timberg collaborated with lyricists Buddy Kaye and Sammy Cahn on a number of popular songs. The song, "Help Yourself to My Heart," written by Timberg and Cahn, was recorded by Frank Sinatra and included in a Sinatra retrospective released in the mid-1980s. Pat Timberg has discovered dozens of unreleased compositions among her father's papers, including four other songs co-written by Cahn.

Later in his career, Timberg produced shows and managed performers such as Don Adams, Jackie Gleason and Edyie Gorme. Pat remembers going to show business restaurants with her father and having people such as Milton Berle come

to their table to greet Sammy. The Timbergs were truly a show business family as Pat's mother and Sammy's first wife, the late Rosemarie Sinnott, was a former Ziegfeld Follies dancer and magazine cover model.

His second marriage to a native of Scranton, PA eventually drew Sammy to that city where he spent the last years of his life. Full of old-fashioned show biz charm, Sammy was a well-known figure in the capital city, and just months before his death in 1992, Sammy was honored by the city with a "Sammy Timberg Day."

"I did everything - managed people, conducted, wrote music, did everything in all ends of show business," Timberg said in an 1984 interview. "It's been a busy life."

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Myron Waldman: Betty's Director

Of the 120 Betty Boop cartoons, several animators stand out as having repeated contact with La Boopster. Willard Bowsky worked on 11, Roland Crandall on 12 and Tom Johnson on 17. No one at the studio matched Myron Waldman's association with the series. Waldman worked on 29 of them, more than any other animator at the Fleischer Studios.

The Fleischer Studio did not assign animators and their units to particular characters or series. So, unlike directors such as Chuck Jones, Tex Avery and the team of Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera, few people at Fleischer's ever became identified with a single character. Waldman's track record with Betty Boop stands out, though.

Waldman, who created Betty's pet dog Pudgy for the series, is very self-effacing about his career in animation, despite the fact that he was the director of two of the four Fleischer shorts to be nominated for an Academy Award (*Hunky and Spunky* and *Educated Fish*). He did outstanding work on the Fleischer Superman (*Billion Dollar Limited*, *Magnetic Telescope*) series and directed the two-reel *Raggedy Ann* and *Raggedy Andy* short.

Born in 1908, Waldman joined the Fleischer Studio in 1930 after graduated from the Fine and Applied Arts program at the Pratt Institute. At the studio, he started as an inker and then moved into the inking department. After winning a studio competition, Waldman was promoted to the in-betweening department and was given his own animation unit in 1933.

One Boop of which Waldman is particularly proud is *A Language All My Own* (1935). Betty Boop was very popular in Japan, and this short was designed to appeal to the Japanese market. In the short,



Myron Waldman at this drawing board

Betty travels to Japan and performs there. Myron wanted to make sure that none of her gestures and movements would offend the Japanese, so he asked a number of Japanese exchange students to check his work.

Waldman was in a unique position at the Fleischer Studio. On one hand he was a talented and loyal team player, but on the other, he was an iconoclast who wasn't afraid to speak his mind. Waldman championed the cause of Lillian Friedman, the studio's first woman animator when others gave her a rough time. He attempted to persuade Max Fleischer to talk with striking artists in the lengthy 1937 strike.

Waldman returned to animation after serving in the Army during World War II. He worked at Famous Studios on *Screen Songs*, *Popeye*, *Little Lulu*, and *Casper* shorts. He wasn't content just with a career in animation, though. He branched out to create a "novel without words," *Eve*, that was a critical and financial success when it was published in 1943. He was the artist on the post-war Sunday comic strip *Happy the Humbug*. He appeared on television during the 1950s with his "Try A Line" drawing act.

In the 1960s and '70s, he worked on a number of Saturday morning series, and was the director on the pilot for the *Out of the Inkwell* series produced by Hal Seeger. Seeger, a former Fleischer Studio employee, had convinced Max Fleischer not only to sell him the rights to do the series, but to appear in the pilot as well. For his final appearance with his silent screen co-star, Waldman recalled that Fleischer had his hair dyed for the occasion. Waldman quit from the series when the budgets would not permit him to do Ko-Ko justice.

Today, Waldman maintains a very busy schedule appearing at galleries around North America publicizing the limited edition cels he draws for Toon Art. 



(© King Features Syndicate/Fleischer Studios, Inc.)

FROM THE BETTY BOOP ARCHIVES....

One of the hottest licensed characters today, Betty Boop has a long history of popping up in places other than animated cartoons. Today her image graces hundreds of products world-wide, and if there is ever a new animated production featuring the Boopster one can expect dozens of more toys, t-shirts, cards, etc. Here are a few Boop items which I've picked up over the years. GMD

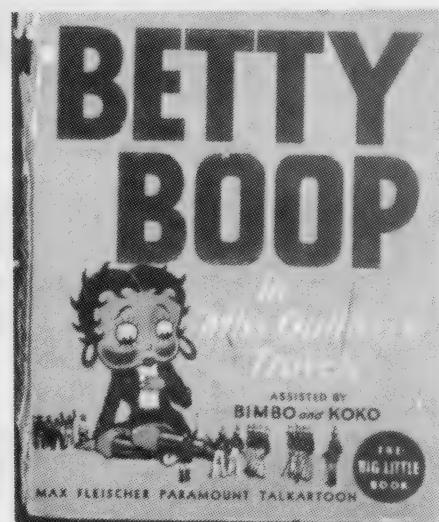


© Fleischer Studio Inc./King Features

(Above) Not until the production of *Gulliver's Travels*, (1939) did Max Fleischer truly see the advantage of licensing his characters like his chief rival Walt Disney. However, in the early Thirties, after successfully stopping a manufacturer from making unauthorized Betty Boop soap, Fleischer relented and did allow some merchandising. The most popular Betty Boop item from the Thirties among collectors today are the Boop dolls made from wood and ceramic.

One of the most unusual items is this embroidered cloth patch (shown at its real size) of Betty's pal, Bimbo. In all my years of scouting antique shows and flea markets, this is the only Bimbo item I've seen from the 1930s. The antique dealer who sold to me thought it was Mickey Mouse! (exact date unknown).

(Below) Big Little Books were originally published by the Whitman Publishing Co., one of the major imprints for children's books for many years. The Big Little Books were named because of their small dimensions, but sizable page counts. This one runs 282 pages! In each Big Little Book every text page was faced with a full page illustration. This 1935 book features Betty and the gang in an adaptation of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and it's an interesting coincidence considering the source material for the first Fleischer animated feature.





© Fleischer Studio Inc./King Features

In the primitive pre-video age of the 1960s, kids would gather in each other's family rooms to present slide shows featuring their favorite cartoon characters. While some of us Baby Boomers might have thought the Kenner Give-A-Show projector was an original idea, this item from 1931 proves that nothing is new under the sun. These are frames taken from color drawings printed on a roll of translucent paper that could be projected onto a wall or sheet. The projector and the "films" were made by Durable Toy and Novelty Co. The story, as such, can be followed by going from the top to bottom frames left to right.



© Fleischer Studio Inc./King Features

(Above) Norman, Oklahoma-based independent publisher Bart Bush produced Betty's first comic book in 1977. Also featuring Felix the Cat (who did enjoy a long run in comic strips and books), *Betty Boop Funnies* successfully reproduced the atmosphere of the vintage Boop cartoons, something that, ironically, Betty's 1930s comic strip never did. Artist and writer Larry Latham created the two Boop stories. Published at a time prior to the advent of comic book shops and the direct market system of distribution, this book fell between the classification of a mainstream comic book and an underground, and sadly, this was the only issue of the title.

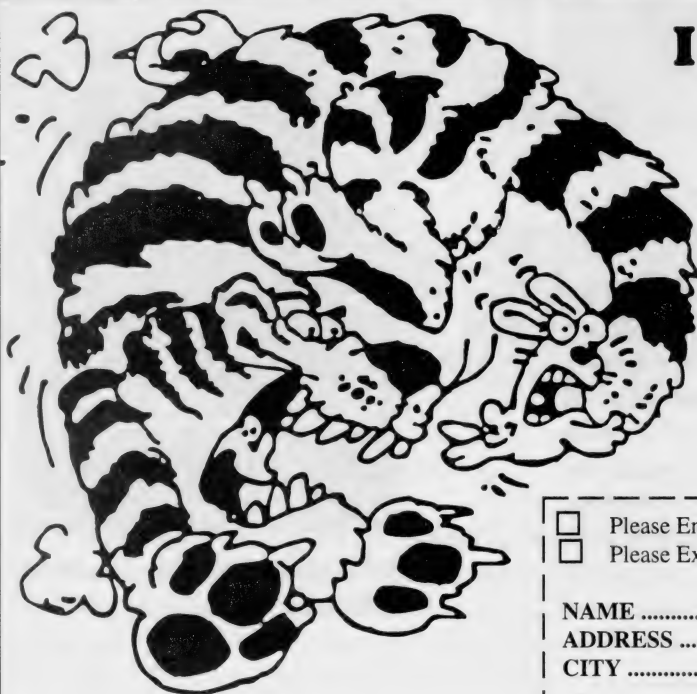


© Fleischer Studio Inc./King Features

(Above and Below) While not a vintage collectible, these postcards require a certain effort to obtain as they are only available at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. The casino carries a wide selection of Betty Boop (and also Popeye) merchandise.



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Faces Behind The Voices

Rob Paulsen: He's Yakko, the Mask, Pinky and many more!

by Mike Dobbs

Open the Toon Message Board of American Online, and very quickly one becomes aware of Paulsen fever. The many animation enthusiasts who leave comments and opinions are all avid fans of the man who currently supplies the voice for Yakko on *Animaniacs*, Throttle on *Biker Mice from Mars*, Pinky from *Pinky and the Brain*, Arthur on *The Tick*, Squishington from *Bump in the Night*, and *The Mask* from the CBS series of the same name.

Rob Paulsen is one of the most versatile voice actors around, and certainly one of the most popular with animation producers and directors. Yet, Rob Paulsen says the attention paid to him by animation fans "shocks me in a positive way, but none the less it shocks me."

That's not a statement of false modesty. While Paulsen is happy for his current status in the industry, he is also a huge fan of his colleagues. Give Paulsen a head start of a few seconds and he can reel off the names of fellow voice artists by whom he is awed...Frank Welker, Jim Cummings, Maurice LaMarche, Tress MacNeille, and Billy West just to name a few.

A thoughtful man with a passion for his work and an easy laugh, Paulsen is extremely happy about his standing in animation and his popularity with fans, but he could have never predicted it.

Growing up in the Flint, MI area, though, acting and animation were not part of his ambitions. Paulsen loved to sing.

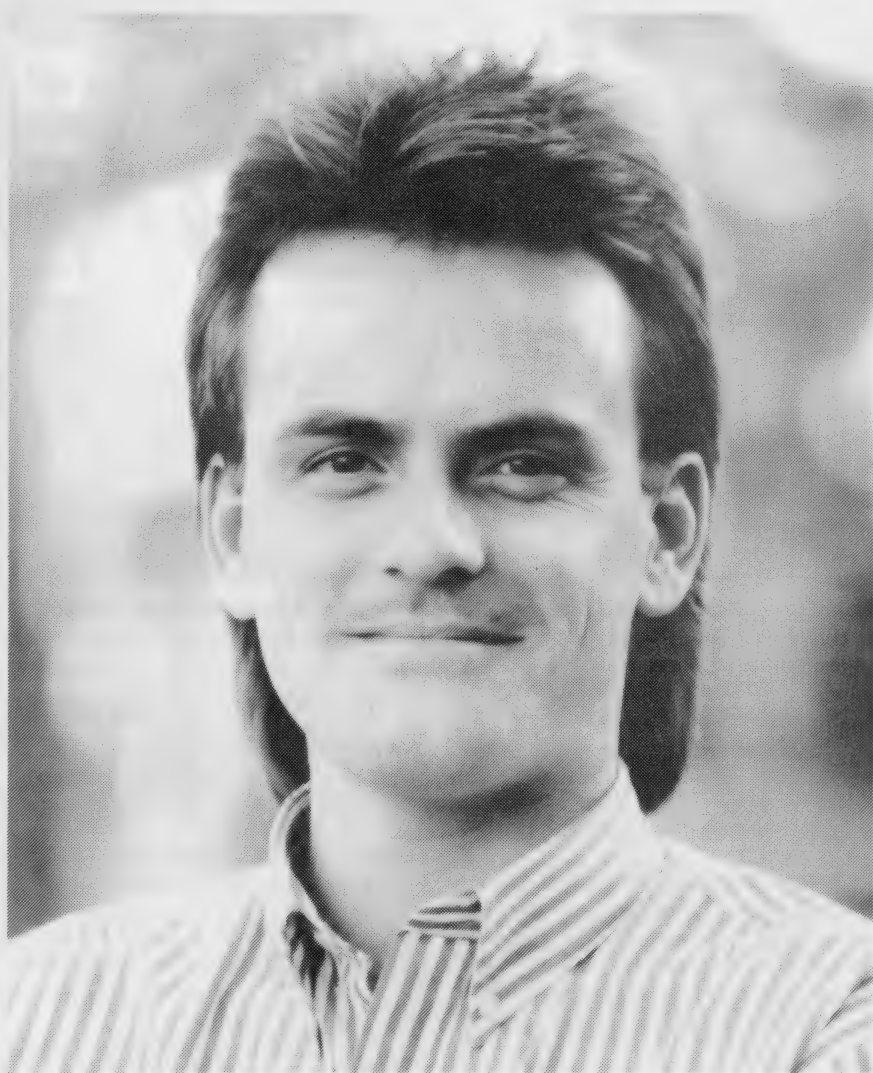
"I've been singing longer than anything. I started out singing in high school, in choirs, rock and roll bands. My parents were always willing to let me listen to Led Zeppelin and The Who as long as I listened to Prokofiev and Shostakovich."

Acting was a passion Paulsen developed by working in live theater.

"I got involved with some theater and traveled around the United States and Canada for about a year doing live theater," said Paulsen. "I moved permanently in 1978 to L.A. to pursue more t.v. stuff."

Paulsen established a busy career. He appeared in over 40 on-camera commercials over the first eight or nine years in Los Angeles, and had guest roles on a number of television series including *Hill Street Blues* and *MacGuyver*. He also appeared in two pilots, and six feature films.

Although Paulsen had appeared in the *G.I. Joe* animated series in 1983 as the characters



Rob Paulsen

Snowjob and Tripwire, he really considers his career in animation beginning with a successful audition in 1984. At a general audition for new actors at Hanna-Barbera, director Gordon Hunt selected him for several productions, the first being the direct-to-video series, *The Greatest Stories of the Bible*. Paulsen followed that assignment with the role of Hadji in the second *Jonny Quest* series at H-B in 1985.

Other roles piled on top of another, and Paulsen found that he appearing more behind a microphone and less in front of a camera.

"I started phasing the on-camera stuff out not because of any particular reason other than I started getting more and more voice work,"

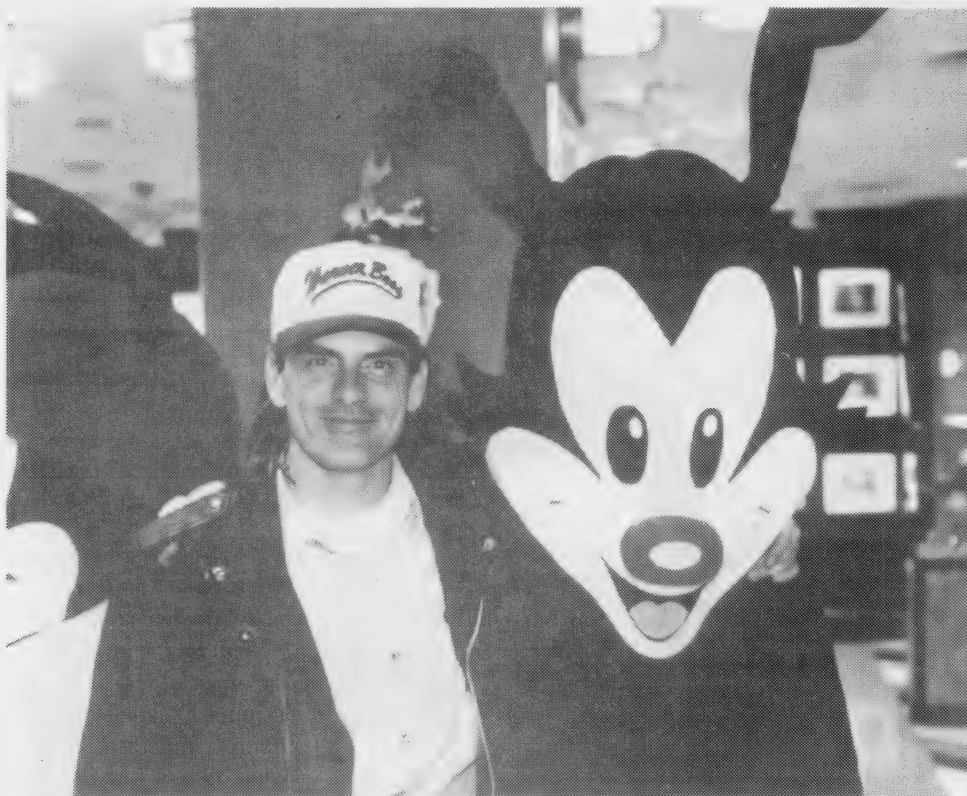
recalled Paulsen who credits his wife with diplomatically reminding him that if he was getting voice work, he should concentrate on it.

Since he hasn't appeared in an on-camera role for more than six years, Paulsen is both flattered and slightly puzzled about all of the fan interest in his feature film work.

"Virtually all of the films are pretty crappy," he said with a laugh.

Stewardess School can currently be seen as part of cable's Comedy Central movie package, and Paulsen plays what he termed "a very broad character about whom there is no question of his sexual identity" in the 1987 comedy.

"It was a really great job. I worked for 12



Paulsen and one of his alter-egos at a recent appearance.

weeks at Columbia [Pictures] and all my checks cleared. You couldn't really ask for more," he chuckled.

The sexual and movie politics made his role in Brian DePalma's sexual thriller *Body Double* (1984) made for a far less comfortable shoot for Paulsen.

"*Body Double* was a little disconcerting for me because it was real clear for some reason that Brian DePalma had this preoccupation on new ways to dispose of women and there was some pretty odd ones in this movie. It was beautifully shot, but I said to myself I'm not sure I want to do this anymore."

Paulsen's son was quite young at the time he appeared in *Body Double*, and while he doesn't consider himself a prude, he thought about the type of films in which he wanted his son to see him. The mean-spiritedness of the DePalma film was not something with which he wanted to be associated.

Voice actors differ on the way they create a characterization, and Paulsen says, "I guess it's function of being an actor, and it's a kind of an organic process that has happened to me ever since I can remember."

The process is "a real collaborative effort," said Paulsen. Sometimes a director will have an idea of what a character should sound like, while others might say, "we'll know when we

hear it."

"Improvisation is extremely important." What really helps me a lot is to improvise in the character I'm trying to come up with."

In creating Squishington for *Bump In The Night*, for instance, Paulsen worked with the directors of the show to come up with the voice. Seeing a picture of the character gave Paulsen a clue about the voice. He remembered that Squishington's roundness led him to a Droopy-style voice, and then he added a Shirley Temple-esque flavor to it when he was told that Squishington is a little shy.

Then Paulsen begins talking "in-character."

"The character starts saying things from the character's brain or his soul and the lines [of dialogue] start making sense," he explained.

For Paulsen, the best characters are those who operate with a complete personality and an internal logic.

"When I see well-developed characters whether they're live-action or animated, I know they come from somewhere," said Paulsen. "I try to create them with a life to the extent they could talk to anyone about anything from their perspective."

Paulsen improvises during recording sessions and frequently contributes lines and ideas which are used by directors. But the goal of the improvisation is not necessarily to add something to the finished cartoon. It's just the

method which Paulsen uses to maintain the character he's created.

Paulsen notes that the directors at Warner Brothers and at *Bump In The Night* especially want him to "bring something to the party." His improvisations are not a critique on the scripts he's given as Paulsen has the highest respect for the writers of his series.

Unlike voice actors of 30 years ago, Paulsen has not been asked to do a cartoon voice that is an outright impersonation of a famous actor. He did note that in the "long and arduous audition process" for Yakko that he was asked to bring the "sensibility of Groucho Marx" into the characterization, but not to do the distinctive Groucho voice.

In creating the voice for Pinky, the rodent's huge teeth was a starting point. Paulsen played around with a voice that reflected a sizable over-bite and then recalled some favorite voices from his childhood. Paulsen was a fan of British humor while growing up. He enjoyed not just Monty Python, but also the *Carry On* film series, and performers such as Billy Connelly, among others. Paulsen has practiced various British accents for years, and thought that Pinky could be a British mouse.

One can easily see why Paulsen enjoys his work with the Warner Brothers producers when he relates the story of just how far the producers of *Animaniacs* are willing to go for an inside joke.

Most of the viewers of *Animaniacs* were probably perplexed about the *Pinky and The Brain* episode in which the Brain is asked to record a number of commercial voice-overs. After all, we're used to seeing the Brain trying to make his next evil plot to take over the world a reality. So why is he recording narrations about frozen fish with crispy crumb coating?

The explanation shows the level of respect the producers of *Animaniacs* have for their voice talent, related Paulsen.

Floating around audio collectors circles is a priceless group of out-takes from a recording session sometime from the early 1980s in which the late great Orson Welles is attempting to read narrations for a series of British frozen food commercials. Welles, who could be a tyrant, objected frequently, profanely and hilariously to the voice-overs as they were written and to the direction he was receiving. At the end of the tape, Welles leaves in a dramatic huff.

Rob Paulsen revealed to **ANIMATO!** readers that his *Pinky and The Brain* co-star Maurice LaMarche is a huge Welles fan who had memorized the out-take tape. Whenever a recording level was needed, LaMarche would perform parts of the out-take tape much to the

Continued on Page 68

アニメ

ANIMATO! ANIME GUIDE



Zenki
Software Sculptures; Volume 1
3 Episodes 90 minutes
Subtitled

If you took a random selection of American television shows from the late '50's to early '60's, you might conclude the only thing Americans viewed was Westerns. So it is with Anime. While there is a wide selection of genres for fans in Japan, Americans get a limited focus to choose from.

Zenki reminds me of the Warner Brothers Westerns of my youth: Entertaining, formulaic genre on a strict budget.

In a nutshell, (pun intended) *Zenki* is the story of a powerful demon lord bound and controlled by monk Enno Ozuno. A mere 55 generations later, Enno's cute as pie ancestor, Chiaki must resurrect *Zenki* to combat the evil god Karma and assorted minions. As a safeguard, wise Enno allows *Zenki* to exist in a harmless wimpy kid-like form until altered by a special incantation.

The bad guys try to get people to come in contact with "seeds of possession" which cause various evil permutations. In episode three, sure to be a fan-boy favorite, a biology teacher

is possessed by a demon instant camera. He runs amok snapping secret photos of nubile teens. Each girl (or boy) is imprisoned alive on the film. Photos with boys are tossed into the trash; girls are pinned to the wall.

In the second episode, Kuribayashi, a timid monk-in-training, gets a spider-based "seed of possession." The demonic monk goes around wrapping people in his web strands, saving the girls for later. When he confronts Chiaki he can only think to lift her dress for a peek at her panties. Such a demon! (Is it me, or does it seem like everyone in Japan is obsessed with young girls' panties?) Kuribayashi does morph into a huge spider. A worthy adversary for the powerful *Zenki*.

In episode one, *Zenki* appears after Chiaki acquires a "bracelet of protection," and just in time too! Chiaki conducts a tour of the local shrine for three young women. While the girls are engaged in the obligatory bath scene, two rogues steal a "seed of possession." The two fellows are promptly fused into a two-headed vampire-like creature bent on menacing the lucky tourists. By the time *Zenki* arrives, the creature morphs into a two-headed, two-dimensional Possession Beast Sairoh-Saiko, direct from a dusty Sat-AM limited animation file. Not impressive and not exactly hair raising. The creature was actually more interesting and menacing before he changed. Alas, *Zenki* must have big creatures to dispatch. It's in his contract.

A Hero/Demon existing as a relatively harmless entity until summoned is entertaining if not a wholly original concept.

The best scenes are the interaction of Chiaki and *Zenki* (in wimpy-brat aspect.) More than once, the grandmother has to save "all powerful" *Zenki* from getting slapped silly by the young girl. The music, storyline, voices and subtitles are all competent. So what keeps me from giving *Zenki* an unequivocal thumbs up? That old budget bugaboo - limited animation. Take this magazine, hold it at arms length. Stare at the cover while shaking and tilting the magazine. Now you know how to stage a fight scene or earthquake!

If *Zenki* sounds like your cup of tea, by all

means, go for it. If, however, you put a premium on great animation, you might look elsewhere for your anime fix. Patrick Duquette

Dragon Half, Parts 1 & 2

AD Vision Catalog #VHSDH/001
55 minutes

I have often written about anime titles in regard to their story points and continuity. However, this is the first such title I have found in which such things were totally unimportant. I kid you not. There is nothing about *Dragon Half* which would lead one to believe it was not a film made merely to amuse and entertain.

The story of *Dragon Half* (what there is of one) involves a half-dragon, half-human girl named Mink, and her desire to become fully human in order to be noticed by singing idol (and almost immortal dragon-slayer) Dick Saucer. However; her father- the Red Lightning (a once-famous dragon-slayer); the King (of what? Don't worry, it isn't important); Rosario, the King's lackey; and the King's daughter, and dark sorceress, Vina are hell-bent on frustrating her wishes. But like I stated before, nothing about this video goes on a continued course. The lack of continuity is even lampooned in one spot!

If there is any continuity to this little tale, it is that the character's names remain constant throughout. Story elements are injected and forgotten throughout this. The character's designs even change from one cut to the next! Mink goes through at least five different looks to her in this little series. I think the only cartoons that come close to this sort of loose form in animation would be, well, a Betty Boop cartoon.

It is obvious that the makers of this video only wanted to have fun making it, and to share a little of their mirth with others. The varied character designs are simply the cutest (in Japanese it would be "kawaii") I have ever seen. I like everything about this. Even the nonsensical closing song is fun (set to a theme from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, with bits of his Fifth and Ninth thrown in for good measure). If there are those of you who think anime is

simply not "cartoony" enough, then this one is for you. **Get It! John Beam**



It lives in your brain...
and it won't let you die!

Baoh
AnimEigo Catalog #ET095-003
50 Minutes
Dubbed

This film, which is based upon Hirohiko Araki's manga (comic), has a very interesting, and quite original concept. Imagine a parasite which not only must live off its host, but also must stay alive by providing its host with the means to meet any threat it comes across. This is the basis for *Baoh*, a fairly short Japanese motion picture release (only 50 minutes).

This film concerns a biological and technological organization called Doress, and the development of *Baoh*, a parasitic organism which feeds off the brains of its host. The development of *Baoh* was in order to produce beings not susceptible to being killed through conventional means. *Baoh* enables its host to mutate any form of weaponry necessary to defeat whatever opponent it encounters. With *Baoh*, the host organism becomes a nearly indestructible killing machine.

The first human subject for the *Baoh* experiment is Ikuro Hashizawa, who is taking part totally against his will. However, he is aided in his escape by a ten year-old psychic named Sumire. Together, they wander the countryside trying to find a life for themselves. Meanwhile, Professor Kirinome (the head of the *Baoh* project) sends out professional killers to assassinate Ikuro before *Baoh* is fully allowed

to manifest itself. The only problem is, the more he is attacked, the more developed Ikuro's defenses become. I get the idea that if Doress would simply place Ikuro in a safe environment, he would not become dangerous to anyone.

That is my main beef with this film. Everyone behaves totally irrational to what is going on. But then, how else would the producers of *Baoh* be able to put so much graphic violence in it. The antagonists' attacks on Ikuro provide the audience with exploding heads and flying body parts galore. If you like this sort of thing, then you will probably like *Baoh*.

Lastly, I would like to respond to the English dubbing of this video. Some of the voice acting is pretty good, but most of the male voices sound like they are suffering from constipation. The voice actress for Sumire is totally unconvincing, and Professor Kirinome is pretty ridiculous. I commend AnimEigo for making their releases more accessible to a wider audience; however, they seriously need to work on making their English productions more in keeping with the quality Japanese voice-tracks.
John Beam

Project A-ko: Versus Battle 1 & 2 (Gray Side & Blue Side)

US Manga Corps Catalog Numbers
USM 1105 & USM 1106
54 Minutes and 42 Minutes

I must say, being a huge fan of *Project A-ko*, that I was somewhat taken aback by what I saw when I first viewed this two-part series. It wasn't so much in regard to placing the main characters from the first series in an alternate reality (that of a *Star Wars*-type atmosphere), but that A-ko and B-ko are now friends! In the motion picture *Project A-ko*, and it's three subsequent video releases, these two are deadly enemies. Therefore, seeing these two buddying-up for this was somewhat unnerving at first. I didn't think it was going to work.

However, it does! Remarkably, Katsuhiko Nishijima (series creator) was able to keep everyone in character, and still make the performances convincing. *A-ko Versus Battle Gray Side & Blue Side* involves a sort of anti-messiah character, named Gail, who must awaken Xina, an evil spirit whose dragon will devour the universe in order that a new universe can be born. For some odd reason, C-ko Kotobuki (still the incredibly cute crybaby as she ever was) is the person Xina must manifest itself through. Gail sends two intergalactic outlaws to capture C-ko in order that he can bring about the possession of her by Xina.

C-ko manages to get away, though, through totally improbable circumstances, and literally falls into the hands of A-ko and B-ko, who are making a living off bounties of giant lizards.

Yet, no amount of protection they can provide can keep Gail from absconding with C-ko, and the incredibly evil Xina indeed manifests itself through her. Now it is a matter of saving the universe. B-ko, however, has fallen for Gail, and A-ko is left with doing the job, along with a member of the Intergalactic Space Patrol who is only six inches tall! The chances of their doing this seems remote, especially since the dragon has already awakened, and is eating solar systems left and right.

This tale is totally ridiculous and far-fetched, but it is also in keeping with the first series. They manage to show that mere circumstances can dictate whether or not two people can put up with one another or not. In several clever montages, A-ko and B-ko are shown in different realities dealing with one another as their circumstances dictate. This sort of alternate timeline continuum is the sort of thing that kept *Star Trek: The Next Generation* going for so long, and it works just as well here. I didn't care too much for the ending, but on the whole, I give *A-ko Versus Battle 1 & 2* a moderately high endorsement. **John Beam**



You're Under Arrest!
AnimEigo #ET095-004
25 Minutes
Dubbed

I can easily understand the international appeal of anime stories featuring science fiction, horror or sex, but the contents promised on the box of *You're Under Arrest* mystified me. The

blurb promised a very funny animated police sit-com. I suppose the question I initially had is "why?"

I mean why bother animating material which, at least in this first episode, calls only marginally for animation. Our plot is numbingly familiar. Natsumi is a new police recruit who is late for her first day of work. As she speeds towards the police station, she's stopped by another cop who decides not to ticket her. Naturally, when she reports to the station, guess who is going to be her partner?

The new recruit is supposed to be an instinctive street-smart person while her partner, Miyuki, is a super-efficient vet. Their test as partners comes when an unidentified motorist leads them on a chase through the town while they have to try to solve his riddle about hidden "fireworks."

Anyone who has seen *Car 54 Where Are You?* or the *Police Academy* film series know that the vein of station house humor has been tapped out a long time ago. Perhaps to the Japanese this kind of humor is fresh, but I suspect only the most ardent anime fans will enjoy this production.

The technical side of the production is first-rate. There is some above average car chase animation, and the dubbing is proficient. It's a nice house, but there's not much furniture inside. **GMD**

Devil Man Volumes One and Two

Manga; 55 minutes each

Volume One # 800 634 791-3

Volume Two #800 634 793-2

Dubbed

Fans of American comic books might remember The Demon, a fun character Jack Kirby created during his late mid-Seventies sojourn at DC. The Demon concerned itself with the adventures of Jason Blood who shared his existence with a demon. The title had a lot of the Kirby flair and imagination.

I doubt that the Japanese creators of *Devil Man* had ever seen Kirby's comic books, but their theme is similar. In *Devil Man*, a high school student is brought face-to-face with a horrifying fact. The demons of mythology are real, and they're awakening from a suspended animation hungry for human blood and dominance over the earth. Our hero, Akira, is told about the demonic threat from his friend Ryo who had lost his father to the demons when he tried to merge with one of them.

It seems the best way to kill the demons is to become one with one of them, but only someone pure in heart can maintain control over the demon's will. At Ryo's urging, Akira undergoes the transformation to become Devil Man.

I have to say that I admire the restraint of the film makers. This could have been a real



bloodbath, and while it is graphic at times, it is not as graphic as much of the other adult-oriented anime I've seen.

There is also an indication the story writers want to do more than just present a series of bloody fights between Devil Man and the demons who attempt to stop his war against them. Akira is ambivalent at times over his situation. After all, Ryo was supposed to merge with a demon as well but didn't. This leaves Akira alone in his almost Jekyll and Hyde

existence.

The animation is nifty, particularly in the water demon scenes in Volume 2, and the dubbing was acceptable. Be aware that this is material not for children. There is the usual tendency to put the teenage girl character (who serves as some sort of romantic interest) into situations in which she becomes buck naked. **GMD**

Patlabor 1 Mobile Police

Manga; 118 Minutes

#800 634 801-3

Dubbed

At last! I had just about given up on ever seeing an anime production with an original use for the stereotypical giant robot mechanisms when I viewed this tape.

In order to protect the environment against over-development, a scientist has secretly programmed a glitch into the operating system of robotic construction laborers that will ultimately sabotage a major building project. A police unit which uses robots of its own has to find out the secret before all havoc breaks loose.

Patlabor 1 Mobile Police has an involving plot and manages to tell its story without blood and guts and T and A. While the film makers frequently cheat on the animation in this production (characters who are speaking have their backs to the viewer, etc) there are some wonderfully animated sequences. **GMD**

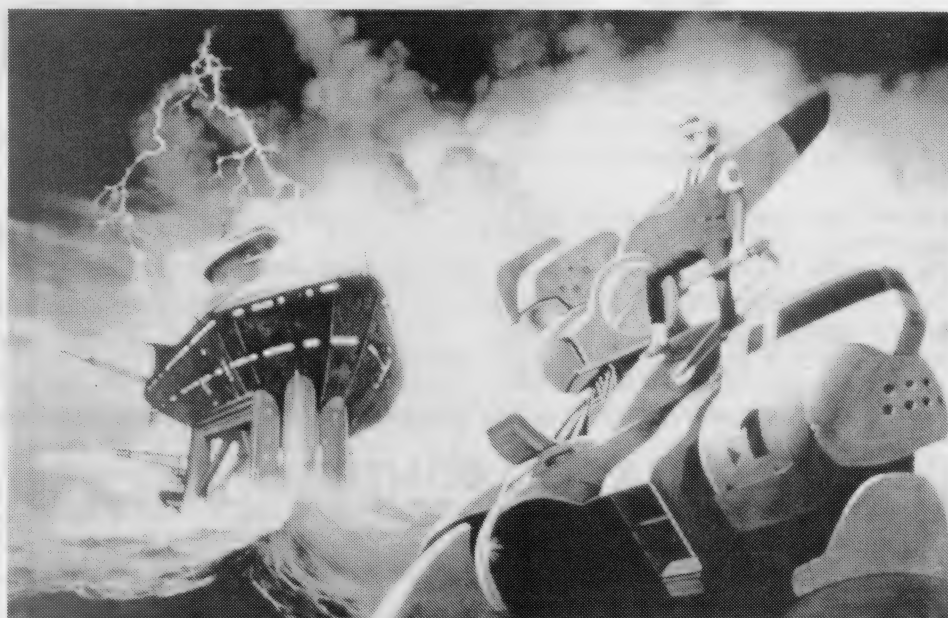
Angel Cop 2

Manga; 30 Minutes

#800 635 487-3

Dubbed

With the exception of the more sexually



explicit and violent anime productions I've seen, this is one of the worst tapes I've sat through. I'm sure the intent of the film makers was to make a tough gritty police drama with a look that didn't include the stereotypical Japanese big eye look. So instead of big eyes, we've got little teeny eyes! The characters just don't look ugly, they act ugly. The plot revolves around a cynical female cop named Angel (right!) and an on-going investigation into a communist terrorist group. In this installment, the cops find they are not the only ones after the terrorists. Apparently some supernatural beings who can start fires are also after the communists only they set them ablaze when they find them. Nasty stuff. GMD

Street Fight II: The Animated Movie
Renegade (Sony Music Video); 96 minutes
Dubbed

First two disclaimers. First, I don't play arcade games and second, I did not yet see the Jean Claude Van Damme film adaptation of the *Street Fighter* video game. With that being said, I have to admit there were times in this feature-length film that I did enjoy the action. Where this movie excels is in the fight sequences themselves. The animation is fluid and accomplished and the choreography is imaginative. At times I thought I was watching an animated John Woo movie!

There is a down side, though. Despite the film's animation quality and its design, the

story and characterizations leave much to be desired. The film takes for granted the viewers understand who are the evil General Bison and the courageous Col. Guile and what is the nature of their conflict. If you're like me and don't know ahead of time what you're supposed to know, then you might find the first part of *StreetFighter II* to be a bit perplexing.

At least, though, this isn't another bloodfest despite the multiple poundings taken by various characters. If you like to see animated characters imaginatively beating the crap out of one another for 90 minutes-plus without gore, you just might like *Streetfighter II*. Note: this film is being releases in a special edited version for younger viewers and an unedited version. This review is of the unedited cut. GMD



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THE DISNEY DISTINCTION:

An ANIMATO! Interview With Frank (Thomas) and Ollie (Johnston)

by Gord Wilson

Editor's note: Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston are not just two of the most influential animators from the golden era of the Disney Studio, but also are the authors of the series of books on animation that are considered among the best written on the subject. Gord Wilson caught up with these two of the legendary Disney "Nine Old men" to discuss their new projects.

GW: You've been pretty busy these days, with your 4th book, *The Disney Villain*, recently out, and a new edition of *The Illusion of Life* hot off the press.

OJ: We're doing 5,000 signatures for the limited edition of *The Illusion of Life*. There will only be 3500 copies, but Hyperion wanted 5,000 in case some got wrecked. That's our most successful book. This will be the sixth edition. Since it first came out in the fall of 1981, it's sold over 150,000 copies. We're proud that it's known as the bible of the industry; it covers what we think made the pictures at Disney what they were.

GW: The book I like is *Too Funny For Words*.

OJ: That was done by our first publisher, Abbey Press, and I think Hyperion may reprint that. I don't think Abbey's destroyed those prints. However, Hyperion scanned our first book, and got such wonderful reproductions, they may do the same with that.

GW: They scanned it?

OJ: They had to. All the material was gone. They would've had to go through all that elaborate photographing and color separations, and Hyperion felt it would cost too much money. So they bought a copy at a second hand store, and guess what it cost? Somewhere between \$400 and \$500. They tore it all apart, and flattened it out, and scanned it.

GW: How about your *Bambi* book?

OJ: The publisher goofed on that, and ended up making it more of a kids' book. The *Villains* book was marketed OK, but I doubt it will ever sell as many copies as *Illusion of Life*, because

its purpose is more for entertainment. Hyperion will do all our stuff from now on, and I hope they republish all our books. Eventually they might come out in a package, with a slipcase. This new limited edition of *Illusion of Life* is the same as the original limited edition, but with this foldout thing about me and Frank with pictures of us surrounded by characters we drew; that's what we're signing.

GW: Wasn't it also released as one of those tiny \$10 books at Barnes and Noble?

OJ: You're probably thinking of *Disney Treasures*, which oddly enough, got the same cover as our book. They're talking about doing *Bambi* or *Too Funny* in one of those little 6" square books you're talking about, and putting out about 10,000 copies, and seeing how it goes.

GW: You're also doing signings at galleries.

OJ: Frank and I sign cels at galleries—not just our characters—for any Disney pictures. If we

know for sure it's somebody else's work, we write on it, say, "Done by Milt Kahl," but then we sign our own names too. We also sign drawings—pencil sketches. That's what we did at Disney; we didn't do cels. We worked in pencil, did our drawings in the rough. You find some of those in the *Illusion of Life* book.

That's the way we animated. That's the way most all animators animate, except perhaps on Saturday morning stuff, where they don't have the money to have them cleaned up. They just animate them all cleaned up to begin with; they don't have anybody to do the erasing of lines. Walt insisted on pencil sketches, because he thought we got more spontaneity in our drawings.

GW: As in squash and stretch animation?

OJ: The main thing that Walt wanted in animation was acting. As opposed to action. You can imagine a guy on the stage. Instead of just doing his lines, he uses his body and



Ollie Johnston (left) and Frank Thomas

expressions to show the audience what he's thinking. That's the Illusion of life. Starting back with *Plane Crazy*, Walt recognized the importance of the acting, the characters. He was the first producer to recognize that. So by the time we came along, and did *Snow White*, *Pinocchio*, and all those, that was the primary thing that made a Disney picture stand out, and still is.

GW: Dave Fleischer used to dress up as Koko the Clown.

OJ: That was live acting, wasn't it? As a model for the animated clown—then they were trying to get acting into it. Sometimes they used rotoscoping. We used rotoscoping too, but when we did, we exaggerated it, so it looked like animation. Rotoscoping, if you just trace it, looks terrible. You have to exaggerate it the right ways with squash and stretch.

GW: How did you meet Frank?

OJ: We both went to Stanford. I met Frank the first day because we had a landscape class together. We both worked for Stanford's humor magazine, *Chaparral*; I liked drawing gags for that. We moved into a boarding house, then got an apartment together.

We went to art school after Stanford at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, which is now part of California School of the Arts. Frank preceded me by six months there, and we started rooming together. Disney took over Chouinard's in the late 'fifties, and built a whole new college out in Valencia, California, outside of Los Angeles. This art school has drama, music, animation, regular art, dance—all the arts combined. If you're making a film, and you want a little bit of music to go with your film, you go to the music department, or for voice acting, to the drama department. They work together; it's a wonderful school.

GW: When did you get to Disney?

FT: I started in 1934 as an inbetweeners. Before New Years I joined Freddy Moore, as his assistant, and in three months was doing cleanup as well. A year later I moved into animation on *Snow White*. Then Ollie moved in to work with Freddy Moore.

OJ: I got there in January of 1935, about 4 months after Frank. I started as an inbetweeners. Everybody does, unless you go into story or something like that. Then you go into cleanup. Inbetweening is the drawing in between the animator's drawing. As an assistant, you clean up his rough drawings. When you start



Back in 1942, Ollie Johnston (left), Milt Kahl (standing), and Frank Thomas (right) introduce Peter Behn, the voice of Thumper in *Bambi*, to a real rabbit. (© The Walt Disney Company. All Rights Reserved)

animating, you do your own drawings; you have your inbetweeners, who does the follow up work on your stuff.

As an inbetweeners, you learn a tremendous amount, because you're doing in betweeners between the animator's extreme drawings. By doing that you learn the way he made things move, the timing he used, how broad his expressions were, how he put over his stuff so that the audience could identify with him.

My first job at the studio was inbetweeners on Mickey Mouse for *Mickey's Garden*. I did that for three months, then they started giving me the cleanups to do. The director picked my work out as being very good, so people started wanting me to be their assistant. I fortunately got on with Fred Moore, who was the top animator at the studio—the top man on the dwarves. I worked on *Snow White* under him, and learned a heck of a lot about animation, and how to approach problems in animation, so I owe that man a lot.

FT: No one knew how to do a feature or animate as well as Walt wanted. One night someone had a 16mm camera, and we all played dwarves, acting out Happy, Grumpy, Sleepy, and the rest of them. It was all very ridiculous. The next day the film mysteriously disappeared and was never seen again.

OJ: Then they moved me into animation full

time. My first picture was *The Brave Little Tailor*. I did Mickey on that—not all of him obviously, but I did some. Then I worked on *The Practical Pig* in 1939. I did the pigs—not all of them, though—no one guy does all of anything on any picture. On *Bambi*, I worked on Bambi, Thumper, Faline, and all the little animals.

GW: My mom loves Thumper; you're her favorite then.

OJ: (laughs) Well, Frank worked on Thumper, too, and Bambi, and Faline. They liked what we did, so when *Pinocchio* started, they put me and Frank on that.

FT: Sidney Franklin at MGM was in love with the Bambi story, but he couldn't get it to work. He went to Walt and said, "you're the only one in Hollywood who can do it." Bambi was the first attempt to photograph a model, and he wanted to see if we could draw a deer. After three months we showed Walt our stuff, and he thought it was pure gold. "Teach Marc Davis to animate," he said, so Marc was on the Bambi unit with us. We worked together on Flower, the skunk. He did the skunk hibernating, and as an adult. I did where Flower first meets Bambi.

While we were waiting for Walt to straighten out *Pinocchio*, we did the best shorts the studio ever did, including *The Brave Little Tailor*, *The*

Ugly Duckling, and *The Practical Pig*. Suddenly *Pinocchio* was back, with a cricket and a blue fairy, and *Pinocchio* was changed from a smart-aleck kid to a real character, so we figured Walt knew what he was doing. My two most interesting challenges were animating *Pinocchio* early on, when he has strings as a puppet, and when he's in the bird cage, bouncing along in the back of Stromboli's wagon.

GW: Do you have a favorite cartoon?

OJ: I liked the ones I was working on; you had to. They all became my friends. That's what I loved about Disney—he developed his stories with such great characters. I was fortunate enough to get great characters to work on. I loved *Pinocchio*; I'll never forget it. But when I moved for a brief time to *Fantasia*, I was fascinated with that—the idea of bringing something visually to life with music. I worked on the Beethoven section, with the cupids and centaurettes.

GW: Didn't they end up censoring that?

OJ: When you see our new edition of *Illusion of Life* with the paste in I'm telling you about, you'll see a drawing I used with a cupid and a centaurette—the upper part. Her breasts weren't covered in the stuff I did, but she was mostly close-ups. Later they took one out due to the racial balance of the centaurettes. Wonderful picture, that *Fantasia*.

GW: How'd you feel about the re-release?

OJ: It looks OK now; they've fixed the color up. They re-released it in 1981 with new sound, which I thought was terrible: they rearranged it, and it didn't fit the action or anything. They went back to the original sound in this latest release, and sparked up the color. I thought they maybe got it a little too bright in spots, but it's a marvelous picture.

GW: Did you read that book on Walt Disney, *Hollywood's Dark Prince*?

OJ: No, I purposely didn't read it. I saw some interviews about it, and read some newspaper reviews of it; that was enough to turn me off. The idea of saying that Walt was illegitimate, born of some Spanish woman or something—I don't remember what—is so ridiculous. If you've seen Walt's brothers, they all have that family look to them.

GW: How about *The Disney Version*, Richard Shickel's book?

OJ: He didn't interview the right people. He wanted to be the first to cut Walt down. I think he's since gained more respect for Walt over the

years. He wrote that without even knowing about Walt. He never interviewed any of us; he just interviewed disgruntled people. That's the way it usually happens. When you want to go out and make a name for yourself, you cut down an idol. I won't say that the strikers didn't have some reasons—after all, they were being laid off. But they were being laid off because the war started.

FT: The war came along and knocked out the foreign market. Walt had 1200 employees at the end of *Fantasia*, and had to cut that down to 600. It was a very trying time. When the war came in 1942, a large percentage of people at the studio went into the military. I went into the Air Force, just formed from the Army Air Corps. I had to stay an enlisted man if I wanted to make pictures, so I turned down being an officer. I wanted to make training films that would have meaning for soldiers who were going to get shot at.

Mel Blanc did the voices for the main characters. George Baker had started drawing *Sad Sack* in the Air Force paper, the equivalent of the Army's *Stars and Stripes*. Like Bill Mauldin with his comic, *Willie and Joe*, he just got better and better, and they both kept drawing after the war as civilians. Mauldin, by that time, had gotten very, very good.

OJ: How can you keep 1200 people when your income's been cut in half? I was turned down by the Air Force, because I had an ulcer. So I was there the whole time. So many people had left that we had a lot of room. So Walt offered the use of the place, and Lockheed Aircraft moved in a lot of their business people. Walt was glad to rent to them, because it helped the war effort, and also helped Walt, who was heavily in debt, having lost money on the last pictures.

GW: Did you work on *The New Spirit*, the Donald Duck film about "taxes to fight the Axis"?

OJ: Oh, the duck picture. I avoided the duck whenever I could. I didn't like working on him. I liked Donald, but I didn't care about drawing him; it wasn't enough of a challenge to me. Mickey had more in depth to his personality. The duck was a much simpler statement. I liked Goofy. I didn't work on him a lot, just on the baseball picture, and one other.

I did the opening for the Monday *Mickey Mouse Show*, with Mickey playing the piano, and Tuesday, where he's in a straw hat and cane. I liked doing Mickey because he was more like Walt. He'd win his battle by using his head and his wits, while the duck would just get mad and throw things. Mickey was more intelligent. We always thought Mickey was Walt's alter ego.

GW: Then Frank came back after the war?

OJ: I got married in 1943. After the war he came back and got married in 1946. We bought a piece of property together outside of LA near Pasadena in 1945. We built on this piece, and he built on his half, and that's where we live now. So it's easy working together. I have two railroads. One of them, a backyard steam railroad, runs around my house here. That's where Walt got his idea for a train. He loved trains, but hadn't thought of having a backyard railroad. When he heard I had one, he started coming to look at mine.

GW: So that kind of inspired Disneyland, didn't it?

OJ: In some ways, it hastened it, you might say. I think there would've been Disneyland sometime anyway. Then I got interested in a bigger engine, more like Walt has down at Disneyland. I got an old mining engine and restored it. Frank and I bought 40 acres of property in the mountains northeast of San Diego, back in the 'sixties, and I put in 3/4 of a mile of track, and have my big train down there. My son and his wife live there now, and Frank's daughter and her husband live in their place. So now you've got it all.

GW: Could you name some characters you've worked on?

OJ: In *Alice in Wonderland*, Milt Kahl and Marc Davis and I did all of Alice; I also did the little king. I did Mr. Smee in *Peter Pan*; Lady, and Rusty and the scotty in *Lady and the Tramp*. In *Sleeping Beauty*, Frank and I did the three fairies: Flora, Fauna, and Merriwether. On *101 Dalmatians*, I worked on Pongo and Perdida, the puppies, and the little nanny who stood up to Cruella. In *The Sword in the Stone*, I worked on Wart, and Merlin, and a lot of the owl.

Jungle Book was one of my favorites: I worked on Baloo, and Mowgli, the panther, and the little girl Mowgli meets in the village. I did a lot of O'Malley in *The Aristocats*, a lot of Duchess, most of the three kittens, quite a bit of the geese, and all of Uncle Waldo. In *Robin Hood*, I did most of Prince John and Sir Hiss, some of Robin Hood and Maid Marion. In *The Rescuers*, Frank and I worked on Bernard and Bianca, and I did most all of the albatross.

The Fox and the Hound was the last feature we worked on. We mostly worked out the models for the guys, since we knew we wouldn't be there for the whole picture. I did some animation on the fox and Vixie, his girlfriend. Frank did quite a bit of the young fox. My son, Richard

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Distinction - From Page 57

Johnston, wrote the song that Pearl Bailey sings, *The Best of Friends*. So we had our names on the screen at the same time. Frank and I both retired in 1978 to work on our *Illusion of Life*.

GW: What particularly inspired you?

OJ: Walt inspired us a lot, because he had a natural ability to act. He'd spontaneously get up in a meeting and act something out the way he saw it. In *The Jungle Book*, where the bear first appears from behind the trees—Walt would act out how he saw the bear doing that, which gave me the key for the whole character of the bear. Walt says, "you know, he's snapping his fingers—kind of a Phil Harris sort of musician."

GW: Whose work do you especially like?

OJ: I loved Fred Moore's drawings of the dwarves and Mickey—he was the greatest Mickey man. And Bill Tytla, who did Chernobog, the devil figure in *Fantasia*. I also loved his work on the dwarves in *Snow White*, and his Stromboli. I'm very fond of Glen Keane's animation, and his drawing. We used some of it on *The Fox and the Hound*—that real powerful bear stuff with the fox. I like what he did on *Pocahontas*. I think he did some lovely drawings. I like his stuff very much.

I like Andreas Deja's work. I loved Claude Coats' backgrounds in Gepetto's workshop. There's a big candle in *Pinocchio* that he painted. There were a lot of good background painters. I loved Ty Wong's work. Look through the *Bambi* book; he did a lot of the background work, and they're tremendous paintings. Wooley Reitherman, Wilfred Jackson; I thought Dave Hand was an excellent director, and Ham Luske—I worked under him on *Pinocchio*. He was an intellectual, and the first one to develop a way of working. He worked out a procedure for young people, and served as a mentor. Fred Moore and Bill Tytla felt things, but Ham analyzed them. And I admire Frank's work tremendously.

GW: What did you think of *Roger Rabbit*?

OJ: I liked the idea of it, but if I were working as the producer or director, I'd develop a live-action picture using animation in a different way. Sort of like the Disney—MGM thing at Disney World in Florida. I like the type of thing where you have some live action characters, and maybe an argument between the guy and the gal or something, and who a little cartoon caricature of each one—what they're really

thinking. I don't know if that'll ever be done—it won't be done by me, anyway.

GW: What do you think of recent Disney animation?

OJ: I think the guys are real good. Glen Keane, Manny Cartwright, Don Musker, and Ron Clements were all there before we retired. We got a chance to work with them, and I think they've all turned out to be really talented guys. Not that they weren't then, but they've developed tremendously.

FT: I'm real happy they're finding their own way. My advice is, don't look at what we did. Do something new; do your own thing. You've got your own audience to satisfy. I can still animate better, in terms of movement and convincingness, putting over a gag or story point—but boy, can they draw! *The Great Mouse Detective* was one done by new animators. The more pictures they do, the better they'll get.

OJ: They're a different group of people. There's no Walt Disney there now, and none of us are there. They're doing what they do; they're doing their own thing, which is more fitting for today's market. There's so much more violence—so much on the news, and on TV. Batman stuff and Arnold and all these big tough guys. Everybody's shooting everybody up and blowing everything up, so you have to have more events in your story, make it more exciting, and move more in a different way than Walt's did. Walt would build things more, individual things—build the characters more, and try to build suspense over a longer period. He did it by knowing the personalities more. Well, they do it more with story.

GW: What about the use of computers?

FT: I'm all for computers. Look at the wildebeest stampede in *The Lion King*; you'd never have been able to do that without a computer. You can turn corners, or follow someone into a jungle, create multiple angles and actions, believable backgrounds and depth scenes with impact and suspense.

OJ: I think they're using it the right way. It's just a tool; it's not taking over the drawing by any means. No way you can draw that stuff the way we did or the way they do on a computer. But you can do simple drawings, like the fish that swim by in *The Little Mermaid*. Do a couple fish, and then duplicate them with a computer, make them different colors, have them go

different speeds. Then it works out great. In some of the stampede in *The Lion King* they followed up with a computer, and duplicated some of those wildebeests. Then they put dust over it with a computer.

GW: In *Aladdin* it worked magnificently, in my estimation: like when the carpet is flying. The carpet is such a wonderful character.

OJ: That was done by Randy Cartwright, who was at the studio when we were there on *The Fox and the Hound*. But the computer animation is not on the characters. Take the ballroom scene at the end of *Beauty and the Beast*. The good thing about that is the scene's animated, but the computer can move around it, adding a third dimension, which you couldn't do with our old multiplane setup.

GW: Have you seen the *Pocahontas* traveling show? Is that unnerving for people, working under a window? Or do they just enjoy having the audience know more about animation?

OJ: I saw that in Seattle. I thought it was OK. Those young guys are getting experience doing that. I think it's good for them, having to explain to the public, and tell them what they know about it, and answer people's questions. The more you answer people's questions, we found, the more you learn yourself.

FT: Anything you can do in live action, in my opinion, you shouldn't do in a cartoon. Using live characters you get a lot of scenes that don't work. You're shooting yourself in the foot. OK, they've had their fun doing live action figures, but look at what's coming up: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Hercules*—both of those have human characters—they don't have it out of their system yet.

There's a terrific future in animation. It's unlimited what you can do. The background, layout, and costuming are so high-quality. They know how to put a picture together, and there's a great heart tug. I hope they'll work more and more with staging, design and drawing. They've achieved striking effects in *Pocahontas*, in the wind, and hair, and waterfalls and mists. These help open up communication with your audience and define what the story's about.

GW: What are your plans now?

OJ: We continue taking trips for Disney and

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Bill Kopp On The Record

The creator of Shnookums and Meat has plenty to say about the status of his show and television animation in general

by Judith Reboy

You'd think that animator Bill Kopp would be a happy camper. He will be voicing some of the characters he helped create on the Fox Kids Network's *Eekstravaganza* for another three seasons, and several publications have announced that his new hit series, *The Shnookums and Meat Funny Cartoon Show* has been picked up by Disney for a second season. But things are not quite as they seem.

Apparently, as of this writing, Kopp has not gotten a firm commitment from Disney for a second season of *Shnookums and Meat*. Meanwhile, many of the carefully selected teams of artists who worked on it were laid off after completing work on *Around the World with Timon and Pumbaa*, the television spinoff of *Lion King*.

"The only reason they were staying on [with Disney] was kind of waiting to see what was going to happen with me and *Shnookums and Meat*."

Kopp calls reports of a renewal in publications like *Wizard and Hero Illustrated*, "a myth... I wish it were true. I really do, because we had a great team assembled and I don't know how we're gonna pull it all back together if they decide to pick it up, and they have until September to decide. In their eyes, [they have decided that], 'Well, let's just wait, and then anybody can come in and do it.' But the problem is, no, it was a very precise congregation of artists that made this thing work, and now it's been disrupted."

"It would be like trying to put the Beatles back together. It just will never be the same. It'll be different, and your guess is as good as mine as to whether it would be better than what had gone before."

"Sometimes I have to pinch myself. It's like the show was made by ghosts. We did all this work; we put it out; it turned out great. It turned out better than I ever thought it would... far better... We're being utterly ignored by

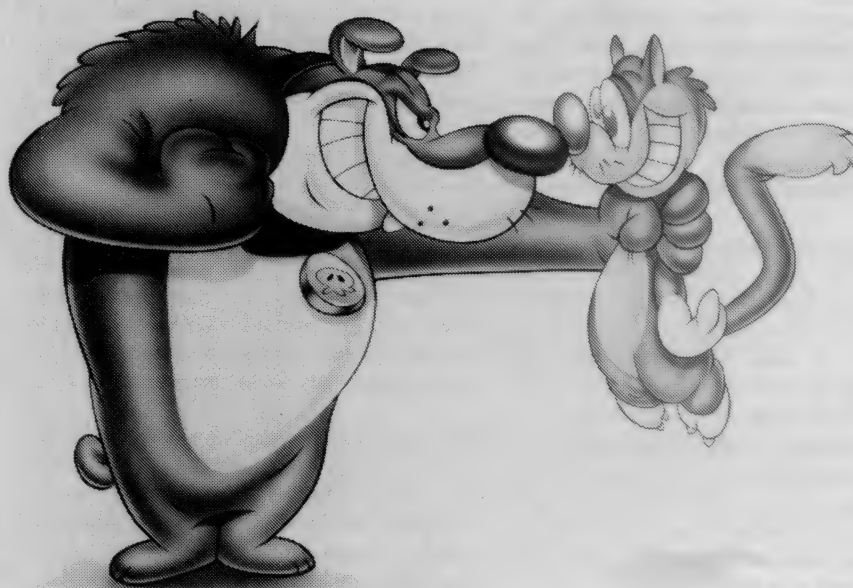
everybody. It's like we didn't do anything."

"It has enough leverage on a ratings level that if it was, for instance, a Fox show... we'd be jammin' through our second season by now. I don't know what they're waiting for."

Considering the effort that Disney usually

comic book form, except for some full page advertisements announcing the January 2 premiere.

While obviously displeased with the current series of events, Kopp freely offers that, "I praise [Disney] for having the courage to do it



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puts into merchandising their characters, the lack of *Shnookums and Meat* tie ins seems to bode poorly for Kopp and company. Aside from a line of pastas, nothing is currently available.

Contrast this with the massive campaign supporting *Gargoyles*. There are action figures, T-shirts, and posters. The first five episodes are already out on video! Even the Disney Stores, which traditionally do not carry much merchandise for the Disney Afternoon shows, have jumped heavily on the bandwagon.

The *Shnookums and Meat* cast is conspicuous by its absence from the theme parks as well. Kopp notes that he had initially heard that costumes of his characters were being made, but apparently all that stopped at Christmastime, before the show even hit the airwaves!

"It was just all of a sudden 'poof!' We couldn't get an answer from anybody. It was like the CIA. '*Shnookums and Meat*? Covert operation! We don't talk about that anymore!'"

Another item of note: As of this writing, the *Shnookums and Meat* gang are the only Disney Afternoon characters that have yet to appear in

in the first place. It's really unprecedented."

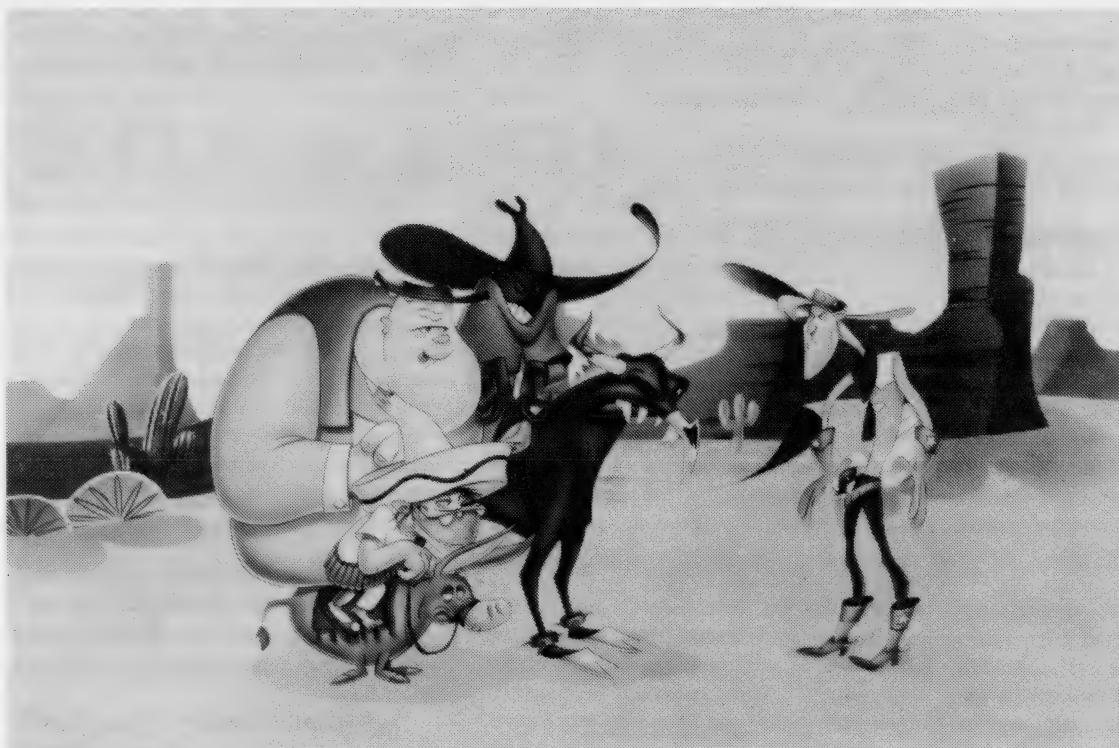
"I don't want to sound like I'm down on Disney, because they gave me a great opportunity, and they really held up to their word. They told me, 'We're going to let you do whatever you want to do. Here's a box of money. Now go make the show.' And I did, and they really did stay out of the way. There was never anything said about them picking up another season or anything."

How much freedom he was given? "Aside from the occasional [problems with] BS&P, I was absolutely free to do whatever. It was rare for me to ever have to do a second draft of a script."

In fact, ANIMATO! readers who watch *Shnookums and Meat* may have recognized a censored *Eek* episode title, "There Are Spiders All Over Me," [see the interview with Savage Steve Holland in ANIMATO! #27] as an episode title for *Tex Tinstar: Best of the West*.

"Well," laughs Kopp, "I figured we couldn't use it there, so I'd use it on *Shnookums and Meat*. There are no spiders in the episode, of course."

Actually, there was one area where Disney



Will Tex Tinstar ride the cathode tube range again? © 1994 Buena Vista Television

did step in. They criticized the Kopp for his treatment of women, which resulted in an unexpected metamorphosis.

"On the *Tex Tinstar* stuff, I had a character called Monica Betty Lou Sue Veronica, and she was to be kidnapped from the town of Bonehead in the first episode, and to be sort of the McGuffin throughout the whole story. And Disney hated that. They said, 'You can't treat women like that.' Even though I had her kicking the Wrong Riders' asses the whole time!

"They said 'No, you can't show a woman in jeopardy. She's got to be able to deal with it.' You know, the whole thing is about cliches, and they're throwing away one of the most prominent cliches in a Western to the wind. So she turned into a safe and I wrote her out because there was no way to deal with it."

Kopp maintains that he is frequently asked why there is no "gal" in *Tex Tinstar*. He replies that she's turned into a safe "as some girls will."

Spoiler Warning!!! If the show does continue, viewers may yet get to see the lovely Monica Betty Lou Sue Veronica. In the next episode, Kopp would have had someone finally open the safe that the luckless Wrong Riders have been unable to crack in the previous 13 installments. Then out would step Monica Betty Lou Sue Veronica, who'd apparently been hiding there all along!

After passionately kissing Tex, she would unzip her outfit and be revealed as Clem, the unwashed man-mountain of the Wrong Riders!

This would not only set up an interesting anomaly, but presumably also send Tex off in search of a good mouthwash! **End of Spoiler Warning.**

Kopp dealt with the criticism of his female characters by introducing an unlikely role model: Pith Possum's overzealous grandmother, Pearl Possum. *Eek* fans will notice an uncanny resemblance between Pearl and the Old Lady who nearly killed Eek with kindness in the pilot episode, "*Misereek*." Both are even similarly voiced by Charlie Adler, although Kopp had him give Pearl a slight Louisiana accent.

However, their personalities couldn't be further apart. While Eek runs himself ragged to keep the Old Lady out of danger, Pith practically has to rescue the baddies of Possum City from tenacious Grandma Pearl.

"I've always loved that kind of thing," he says, "making an elderly character either somebody who's oblivious and needs to be rescued, or, and to my mind this is the funnier thing, is what I did with Pearl, which is making the character superior. Everybody goes, 'Oh my God!' and they're getting their butts kicked by this old lady."

"I felt kind of vindicated by that one because Disney gave me a hard time about how I dealt with females in my cartoons. They were always putting me under a microscope. I felt heroic when I came up with Pearl Possum, because not only did I put women on a pedestal, but elderly women at that!"

If the show gets renewed, viewers can count on the return of Pearl Possum.

While awaiting the fate of *Shnookums and Meat*, Kopp has been developing a spinoff of *Pith Possum*: *Superdynamic Possum of Tomorrow* for Disney, starring Ralph and Al, a bumbling bear and dog who framed Pith by badly impersonating him and his sidekick, Obediah the Wonder Raccoon during a crime spree.

Meanwhile, he is looking to the future. *Betty of the Jungle*, which he had in development as a late night series for Fox several years ago, may finally see life as a feature film. [For one of Kopp's early sketches, see **ANIMATO!** #26.] If it gets off the ground, it will take his career a direction he feels is inevitable: Adult-oriented features.

"Somebody's going to

come along at some point and give somebody a whole bunch of money to do a project like Betty and it's going to kick the door open. It's going to do like what happened with the TV animation. There's just going to be an influx of everybody trying to ape or mimic or whatever, but that does matter as long as one gets made."

"We've got to stop pretending that cartoons are [just] for kids, and once we get over that kind of prejudice, then a lot more stuff will start to happen."

One of his pet peeves in the feature film arena is a lack of distressing lack of creativity in the use of arguably one of the flexible mediums available. "Disney," he says "stands alone [in feature animation], and God bless 'em. Disney consequently has become an American institution.

"We don't even call it a 'Disney animated feature' anymore. Before it's even out, they call it a 'Disney animated classic.' It may very well be, but they can afford to spend \$50 million and five years on a feature. And there's nothing wrong with that, but don't try to ape that!"

Bill wants to see the rest of the studios to respond to Disney's success by creating a wide variety of films. He likens this to the 1930's, when the upstart Warner Brothers gang at Termite Terrace countered Disney's Mickey Mouse with the anarchic *Looney Tunes* gang. However, he laments that currently, "Everybody still thinks that animation has to be a fairy tale, and you have to have a magic orb that the princess has to find and get ahold of. . . And at

the end, everything's happy."

"It's going to take a long time to retrain the industry, because everybody says they want to make something wild and crazy, but they get very cold feet when it comes to plopping \$20 or \$25 million dollars down.

"Jim Carrey is a cartoon. And if he can make \$200 million, then why not make [a cartoon comedy]. . . Animation, still, friends, is an 'arcane' art form and people are scared of it because they don't understand it. And they think that the people who do are a bunch of insane maniacs who can't hold it together, which is totally false!

"I made 39 cartoons last year, and I wrote every one of those scripts. Savage [Steve Holland, Kopp's friend and frequent collaborator] has been writing *Eek* for the last two years. We're very capable individuals. I made six hours of cartoons last year. I think I can pull off 70 minutes."

As we talk about feature animation, the conversation eventually turns to Don Bluth, which prompts Kopp to relate a tale from his days as a student at Cal Arts. "I remember when [Bluth] broke from Disney and we all went to the New Art to hear him talk. We all expected to hear this great revelation about how he was going to lead us into the future. And we were all so hungry. We were just kids. I was like 20. And all he talked about was going back in time to *Snow White*.

"And that's when the schism happened. And it happened at Cal Arts. There was a shaft that broke between the character animators who just wanted to get a job at Disney and guys like me in the film graphics area that wanted to make real films. And we were never the same again after that second year at Cal Arts when we heard that. There were the 'Disney Guys' and then there was us."

And yet, he gladly gives the Disney feature department their due. "[Many recent animated features] have no soul. Disney has a soul to draw on. They have a history. . . Their film vocabulary is very, very sophisticated."

And while he bides his time waiting to see what happens to *Shnookums and Meat* and *Betty of the Jungle*, "The other thing that's on my mind these days is getting back together with Savage."

"Savage is the whole reason I got into animation. He was this guy I met at school—I was a painter and he was an animator. He was the guy who turned me on to the world of [animation]. 'Hey, you don't have to draw like Bob Clampett to make a good cartoon. . . Here, look!' There was this whole world of offbeat weirdness that could be made into [cartoons]."

Although Kopp left Savage Studios to work for Disney, the two remain as close as ever, and both miss the unique collaborative relationship they've fostered over the years.

"It's obviously some penance that I owe

that I keep getting sucked into Savage Steve Holland Hell," he quips, tongue definitely in cheek. "I must owe something back to the universe if I keep getting sucked back into it all the time. I really don't mind, though." [Holland, for his part, jokingly tells the curious that he still sees Kopp all the time, "unfortunately" before inevitably singing his pal's praises. Holland will be best man at Kopp's December wedding.]

"I'm longing to get back into cahoots with Savage," he adds, "because going off on my own has shown me that yes, I can do that and I can put a good team together, but I miss the core brilliance that Savage and I had on the first two seasons of *Eek* together.

"It's like Abbott and Costello or any great comedy team. There's no substitute for it. And I don't want to put any of the people that I've worked with on *Shnookums and Meat* down. I'm not doing that. That was great, but I miss working with Savage."

He notes the differences in their writing styles as one of their strengths as a team. "*Eek* is much more cerebral, much more social commentary, where *Shnookums and Meat* is much more pithy [pun intended], much more dealing with a domestic situation and turning it inside out, going for the physical comedy."

Kopp has a reasonably modest view of his own talent. While he has proven himself a master of slapstick as writer on *Shnookums and Meat* and the *Roger Rabbit* shorts, his resume also includes co-writing chores on the classic *Taz-Mania* episode, "*Mishap in the Mist*," in which a female anthropologist studies Taz and his family. It's a masterpiece of verbal gibes.

"The beauty of those first two seasons of *Eek* was that we were able to have such a beautiful marriage of these themes of comedy, the physical and the cerebral, which is a rare combination. And I think that it's an imperative now that we are both missing that aspect of each other." He points out that the ongoing success of *Eek* stands as a testament to Savage's considerable talent as a comedy writer.

Although he considers his *Shnookums and Meat* partner Jeff DeGrandis "a brilliant cartoon director," Kopp says that it was a compartmentalized partnership, with Kopp writing and DeGrandis directing.

"Savage is the only one I can write with. . . We write together twice as fast as any human. And we both really miss that." He guesses that they will be working together on a project within the next year.

Another old school pal that Kopp worked with recently was Pat Ventura, with whom he helped write the *Roger Rabbit* shorts. Ventura was working on a cartoon called "*Short Orders*" for the Cartoon Network's *World Premiere Toons* series, and he was searching for a voice for its star, luckless waiter Yuckie Duck.

The two animators met for lunch one day. "We were getting obnoxious—or I guess I was

getting obnoxious—and he said, 'Hey, that would be a great voice for my character, Yuckie Duck.' And the next thing you know [feigning embarrassment] I'm Yuckie Duck. I was happy to do it for him." The finished product, "*Short Orders*," has proven popular enough for a sequel, which recently aired on the Cartoon Network.

Kopp enjoys doing voice work, but he did very little on *Shnookums and Meat*. "I had such good actors that I was just happy to sit in the room with them and direct their follies."

Apparently, none of the individual voices were cast before the recording sessions. "The script was there, but no character voices. Whoever jumped on it on an improvisational level kind of got the part." Occasionally, Kopp would contribute a voice for one of the smaller parts, most notably one of the Polite Coyotes that ate safecracker Crusty Rustknuckle in *Tex Tinstar*.

When asked if he would consider doing some voice work for hire, he jokes that he'd "work for just about anybody. I'm not proud. I mean, anywhere anybody gives me any money at all, I'll go."

He notes that similarities between the early episodes of *Shnookums and Meat* and *Ren and Stimpy* were due to the participation of former *Ren and Stimpy* staffer Lynn Naylor, who was heavily involved in the first five episodes, which aired as part of the CBS series *Marsupilami*.

The look of *Shnookums and Meat* evolved gradually as the work progressed and it developed what Kopp calls "a life of its own. . . The temperament of *Shnookums and Meat* changed. Not by virtue of trying to go away from *Ren and Stimpy*, or trying to be *Ren and Stimpy*."

"I love *Ren and Stimpy*," he adds. "I love what it's done for the industry. But my humor is different, and I just think it branched out from this difference."

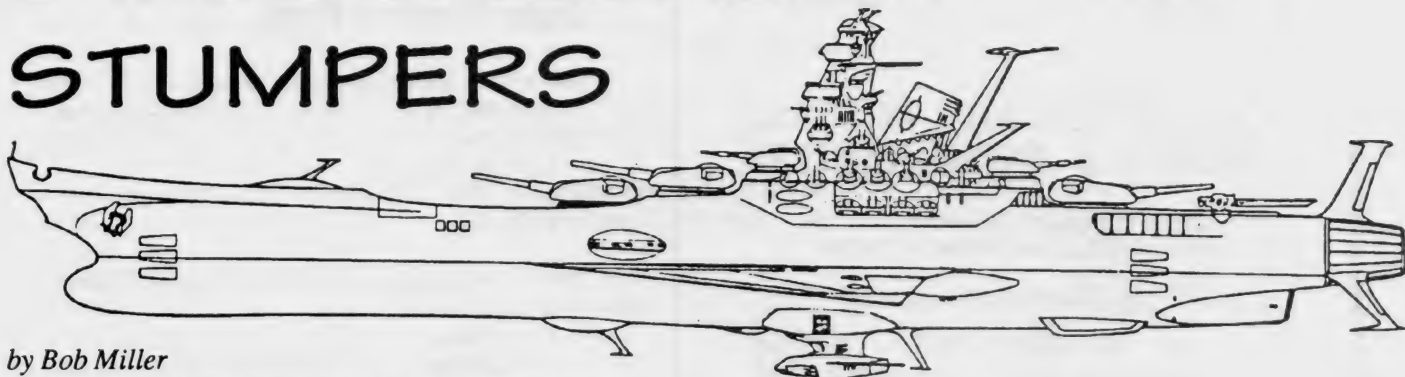
All three of the show's segments changed over the course of the season, but the part that changed the most radically is *Pith Possum*. Originally a spoof of the *Superman* cartoons of the Fleischer Studios, the early episodes followed that format, "where you had Clark and Lois, and the crime happens, then Clark changes into Superman, and this and that. . .

"By episode 4, we were pretty much away from that permanently." He says that there were so many gags and so much character stuff between Pith and the other characters that there just wasn't time to devote to Pith's mousy alter ego, Peter Possum.

"Peter Possum just petered out," quips Kopp. [Ouch!] "He became more of a Batman character, which is more of what he was making fun of in the first place. Batman used to be Bruce Wayne and you kinda sorta see that sometimes, but the meat of the matter is when he's Batman."

Continued on Page 71

STARBLAZERS STUMPERS



by Bob Miller

When *Star Wars* became a hit in 1977, TV syndicators looked for a similar series to cash in on the popularity of space operas. One such show was *Space Battleship Yamato*, made in Japan a few years earlier. The first two (and later, three) seasons of *Yamato* were translated into English as *Star Blazers*, which were broadcast beginning in 1978. All three seasons are now available on home videocassette.

The following "stumpers" will test you on the first season, in which the Earth's "Star Force" battles the evil Gamilon empire. If you're a fan of the show, you'll have no trouble with this quiz. If you're not a fan of the show, you'll still have no trouble! Simply choose the best answer to each of the following questions:

1. *Star Blazers* is produced, written, and directed by
 - a. little green men
 - b. Yoshinobu Nishizaki
 - c. Hanna-Babera Productions
 - d. Naoto Sukiya
 - e. Derek Wildstar
 - f. greedy old men who want to imitate *Star Wars*
2. The recurrent theme of this series seems to be
 - a. "The Ballad of the Star Blazers"
 - b. the consequences of disobeying orders
 - c. the consequences of giving orders
 - d. Responsibility is not important, except when it is important
 - e. the promotion of Japanimation
3. In the year 2199, Earth has been ravaged by
 - a. Godzilla
 - b. the Gamilons
 - c. Gamilon rays
 - d. nuclear power plants
 - e. a horde of hungry tribbles
4. The Argo is remodeled from the ancient Japanese battlecruiser
 - a. Bonzai
 - b. Yamato
 - c. Tomato
 - d. Hai Karate
 - e. Macross
5. The crew of the Argo is known as
 - a. the Force
 - b. the Star Force
 - c. G-Force
 - d. the police force
 - e. Argonauts
6. Who commands the Argo?
 - a. Captain Gideon and Mark Venture
 - b. Captain Avatar and Derek Wildstar
 - c. Captain Atari and Captain Nintendo
 - d. Captain Kirk and Spock
 - e. Captain Crunch and Smedley
7. To save Earth, the Argo must travel to the planet Iscandar, some 148,000 light years distant. To accomplish this journey, the Argo must utilize. . .
 - a. Gamilon power
 - b. the wave-motion engine
 - c. dilithium crystals
 - d. rotating black holes
 - e. a lot of animated drawings
8. But wait! Iscandar is located in the Great Magellanic Cloud, which is over 200,000 light years from Earth. If Iscandar is 148,000 light years from Earth, that means . . .
 - a. Iscandar is not in the Magellanic Cloud
 - b. the producers made a boo-boo
 - c. the Argo must undergo multiple space warps
 - d. this is a question that deserves an answer
 - e. there is something wrong with the navigation computer
9. Okay, let's be serious. Iscandar is 148,000 light years from Earth. The Great Magellanic Cloud is 200,000 light years from Earth. Therefore, the Argo must travel how far?
 - a. I don't know. Could you repeat the question?
 - b. This equation makes no sense
 - c. Forget it. My horoscope warns me not to answer trick questions today
 - d. You've got to be joking. The Great
- Magellanic Cloud is in South America
 - e. It depends upon whether the Argo uses warp speed or Flower Power
10. Queen Starsha of Iscandar has the one thing that can rid the Earth of its radiation pollution. What is it?
 - a. Anti-radiation pills
 - b. Cosmo DNA
 - c. Wave-motion engines
 - d. A Nuclear Freeze
 - e. Project Genesis
11. The Star Force must not only defeat the Gamilons, they must later overcome the threat of . . .
 - a. the Andromeda Strain
 - b. the Comet Empire
 - c. Halley's Comet
 - d. the Space Marines
 - e. cancellation
12. Krypt, Bane, Volgar, and Lysis are all:
 - a. former Communists
 - b. Gamilon officers
 - c. victims of nuclear plague
 - d. various space diseases
 - e. funny names
 - f. brands of mouthwash
13. Who is the Argo's chief engineer?
 - a. Scotty
 - b. Orion
 - c. O'Brian
 - d. Homer
 - e. Dash

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Starblazers - From Previous Page

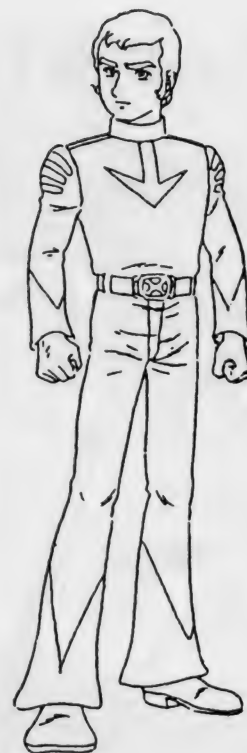
14. Who is the chief medical doctor?
 - a. Dr McCoy
 - b. Dr. Sane
 - c. Dr. Insane
 - d. Dr. Pills
 - e. Dr. Who
15. The Obligatory Cute Robot of this show, IQ-9, is . . .
 - a. not a genius
 - b. not human
 - c. not obligatory
 - d. not cute
 - e. not a robot
 - f. not necessary
16. IQ-9 is aptly named because
 - a. he is an insult to our intelligence
 - b. he is IQ-9 and not R2-D2
 - c. he has an IQ of 9
 - d. he is a genius
 - e. he says so
17. On the Argo, Dr. Sane
 - a. is not funny
 - b. is supposed to be funny
 - c. walks funny
 - d. talks funny
 - e. looks funny
 - f. is from the funny farm
18. During the series, the Argo's weapon range is increased to . .
 - a. 1000 millimeters
 - b. 10 megameters
 - c. 5 millicentons
 - d. 100 microns
 - e. .5 past light speed
19. Derek Wildstar's girlfriend Nova resembles
 - a. Little Orphan Annie
 - b. Astra, Queen Starsha's sister
 - c. a damsel in distress
 - d. a heavenly body
 - e. Phyllis Diller
20. According to Mark Venture, a space warp between the Moon and Mars saves. . .
 - a. money
 - b. thousands of light years
 - c. hundreds of days
 - d. dozens of A.U.'s
 - e. tens of megameters
 - f. scores of micro-centons



21. When Colonel Ganz finds out about the Argo, he wants to destroy it with
- an Ultra-Menace Missile
 - planet bombs
 - the Reflex Gun
 - a spacecraft carrier
 - all of the above
22. According to IQ-9, a space warp is 20% more exciting than . . .
- Dr. Sane
 - a dream
 - Pac-Man
 - the French Chef
 - Star-Trek ,The Motion Picture*
23. Performing a space warp requires precision. Any mistake could. . .
- compromise the Pothagorean Theorem
 - send the Argo into the fourth dimension
 - get the engineer fired
 - violate the Prime Directive
 - require new special effects
24. After leaving Mars, the Argo reaches Jupiter in less than one day. They do this. .
- by space warping
 - by ignoring the Theory of Relativity
 - by sheer luck
 - without Carl Sagan's permission
 - by defying Murphy's law
25. The Argo has a weapon that can destroy an entire continent. This energy is called. . .
- Disco
 - Wave-Motion
 - Slow Motion
 - Loco Motion
 - Go Motion

Stumped? The answer to each question is "b," except for questions with "all of the above," "all of the above" is the answer.

Bob Miller is a professional animator and writer who has seen way too much of the *Star Blazers* program.



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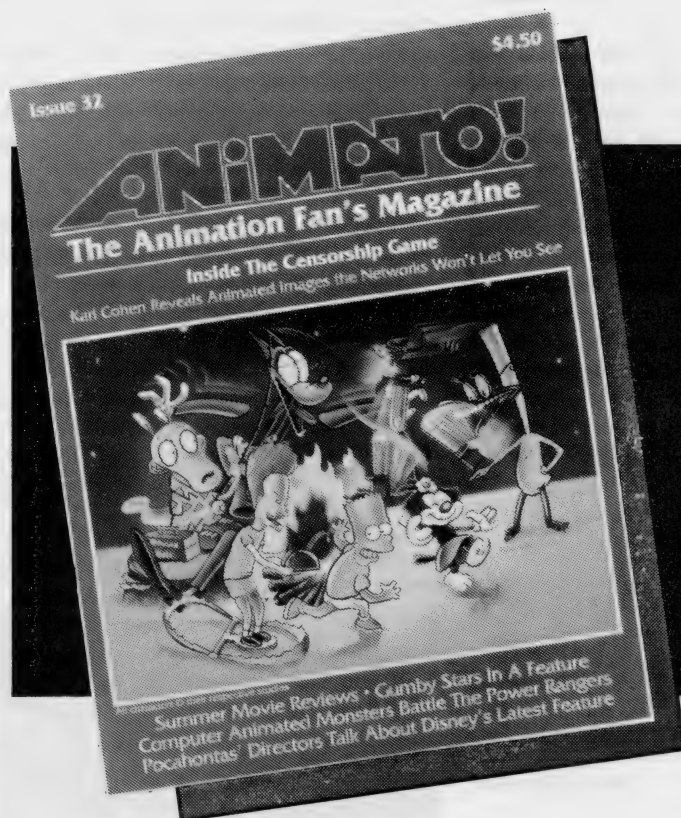
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Lasseter Interview – From Page 23

education at CAL Arts so unique?

"When I was young I did my own cartoon strip. I loved the work of Hank Ketcham and Charles Schulz... I would constantly draw a world with a kid and his friends. They had an incredible tree house and they went down into a big cave that was next to a river. They had their own submarine and their own airplanes..."

"When I went to CalArts it was fantastic being there with those great teachers. We had Bill Moore, a great design teacher from Chouinard [Chouinard's Art Institute]. We had T. Hee, Ken O'Connor, Jack Hannah, and Elmer Plummer. I was taught by brilliant Disney artists and instructors. We also had the support of the studio and had lectures by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, Ward Kimball, Milt Kahl, and others. They even brought in Mike Maltese, Chuck Jones, Maurice Noble and other greats from Warner Brothers. It was fantastic.

"The other things was the students. One of the fortunate things is that I was in the first year of the CalArts character animation program. My classmates included Tim Burton, Brad Bird, John Musker, and Henry Selick.

"We were a tiny group. When they decided to put the first class together they selected students that had been interested in this art form for a long time. We had been writing to the Disney Studio.

"As much as we learned from the instructors we learned that much or even more from each other. We would just sit and talk. The CalArts library had 16mm prints of six Disney features. This was before home video, and we wore those prints out analyzing them. We would watch films twice a week down in the animation room. The school had a 16mm projector that could stop the film, play it slowly and backwards. There would be about ten of us. We would go out and have dinner and then spend the evening analyzing the films.

"When I got out of CalArts, I went to work for Disney. In the early '80's it was a creatively dry period for them from my standpoint. This is before the new regime came in. This was when they were making *The Fox and the Hound*, *Black Cauldron* and that sort of thing. It's phenomenal down there now, but when I was working down there as a young animation student I wanted to learn, wanted to push myself, to do stuff, but it was boring. There really wasn't much to do. I was thinking about trying to do different things, so when I saw computer animation for the first time I got really excited. It was a new world. That is what led me up here.

"Once I got up here with this group, which was formerly the Lucasfilm Computer Division, they all of a sudden embraced my ideas. I started by working on Andre and Wally B. The requirement was to do an android. Since this was Lucasfilm they probably were going to want a C3PO kind of robot. I proposed to them something completely different, something that had more appeal to me. I designed a very cartoony type of character knowing the limitations I had which was to design everything with geometric shapes. I took a cue from early Mickey Mouse cartoons and developed a character that was very simple. They loved it! From that moment on I kept doing what I loved the most... I became my most severe critic. That sort of made it fun because I kept pushing myself.

"Luckily, Bill Reeves, Eben Ostby and the other people I began working with recognize the importance of the story. They became really great story people that I could bounce ideas off of.

What advice would you give students wanting to become animators?

"First, concentrate in the beginning on learning basic skills. Basic drawing, figure

drawing and basic design. Study old movies like crazy. Understand what works, what doesn't work. These basic skills are always needed. Even though I don't sit and draw anymore my knowledge of basic drawing and design is used daily.

"The studying of old movies is where I got a lot of my story skills and learned about timing. Timing is one of the hardest things to learn. Some people say you have timing or you don't. I think there is a way to gain it.

"To develop storytelling skills, study the old films. If you have a good story to tell find out your beginning, middle and end so you can tie it up at the end in a neat bundle. I don't know exactly how you learn those skills. I was lucky to be with some great teachers and some fantastic students. We looked at thousands of movies or at the same movie that you loved a thousand times to figure out how they did it. How do you get those chills on the back of your neck when Dumbo is falling and he loses the magic feather? Timothy is pleading with him to fly. It gets me every time. You go back to see how they got that moment. You go back in the film and you see how they set all these things up. They're such wonderful characters and you care so much. If you love a movie and it makes you laugh go back and study it. Why did it make you laugh?

"For computer animation you still need the basic skills. I don't think anybody is teaching great character animation just using computers. Animation schools like CalArts and Sheridan are still the best places to go to learn this. Both those schools have computers, but you must learn the basics first and then you can figure out how to do it with computer animation."

Karl Cohen is president of ASIFA-San Francisco. He is an animation historian and a regular contributor to ANIMATO!

Paulsen – From Page 50

delight of the engineers and directors.

The producers decided to use the out-take tape as the basis for a *Pinky and The Brain* episode, and commissioned a script which was planned to be a surprise for LaMarche.

"We came into work and we were all sitting there with smiles on our face," recalled Paulsen. "And Maurice walked in and said 'Hi guys. What's up?' He sat down and started glimpsing the script and I remember it was just precious. It was a little kid and Christmas time going, 'Oh my God! Are you kidding me? Is this

a joke?'...It was thrilling just watching him be thrilled."

Paulsen admires his fellow voice actors and enjoys the spontaneity that comes from a group recording session. While occasionally he's required to perform lines by himself, he believes the interaction between the actors improves their performances.

Unlike many voice actors of years past who labored in relative (and some sometimes total) anonymity, Paulsen and his Animaniac co-stars make frequent appearances at Warner Brothers

Studio Stores across the country. They are part of a new generation of voice actors who are being recognized for their contributions to animation and being allowed to interact with the fans who love their work. 



Toon News – From Page 9

personality has starred in a regular programming franchise on Cartoon Network, the new show will infuse its weekday morning line-up with a new energy, offering viewers a human personal compatible with the colorful, over-the-top world of cartoons.

Carrot Top's A.M. Mayhem will combine cartoon titles from Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.'s vast animated library with produced segments that feature the madcap comic in vignettes under a variety of themes and incorporating a number of alter-egos.

Also sprouting from Carrot Top's fertile imagination are his signature inventions, which have taken on an absurd cartoon theme for *Carrot Top's A.M. Mayhem*, from a *Hadji Turban Dispenser* to a *Richie Rich Briefcase*,

complete with ATM machine. Even Porky Pig is a beneficiary of Carrot Top's inventiveness, with a "Personalized Porky Back Slapper" to be used in those moments when his stammer bothers him.

"Carrot Top is as close to a human embodiment of the cartoon world as we are likely to find," says Stephen Croncota, senior vice president of creative services for Cartoon Network and executive producer of *Carrot Top's A.M. Mayhem*. "We needed someone who could look somewhat natural alongside a blue hound and/or an oversized talking gorilla. His talent and energy are the perfect fit for our on-air environment."



Letters – From Page 3

camera moves to another panel with the voice-over saying, and *The Super Friends* with clips of *Cyborg* and *Firestorm* shown in that panel. My description doesn't do justice to the creativeness of these credits which combine two animation studios product under one title.

Warner Brothers, whose DC Comics owns the rights to these characters, has digitally remastered these heroes adventures making these episodes shiny and attractive to a 1990's television audience. All in all a nice creative repackaging of some old friends not seen in many years.

Voices, Voices, Voices!

Beth Nicholls

I am a big cartoon fan, and I love your magazine. I really enjoyed the interview with Don Messick in Issue #31 because I am interested in voice actors and actresses. I would greatly appreciate reading an interview about actors such as Rob Paulsen, Jess Harnell, Maurice LaMarche, Jim Cummings, Frank Welker, or Tress MacNeille.

Also, I was wondering if it would be possible to add voice artists as one of the categories in the animato film poll.

Katie Nicholls

I love your magazine! I especially liked the poll in issue #31. I found it very interesting and I hope to vote for your next one.

One part of cartoons that I like and find interesting is the voice acting. So I especially liked your article called "Face Behind the Voices." Do you have one of those in every one of your issues? I hope so! I have a few suggestions

on who to interview: Rob Paulsen, Jess Harnell, Jim Cummings, Maurice LaMarche, Frank Welker, or Nancy Cartwright. I would love for you to interview anyone of these people! Thanks for your time!!

Lauren Henson

I have become very interested in voice actors lately. Recently, I discovered your magazine and bought it. In it there was a letter requesting an interview with Rob Paulsen, Jess Harnell, Tress MacNeille, etc. This would be a very good idea on your part; especially Rob Paulsen. In my opinion he is a very talented person. I have been keeping track of all these actors' characters for a very long time. Other good actors for you to interview include Jim Cummings and Maurice LaMarche. I know there are many other people besides me who would like you to write about these people. Thank you!

Covering voice actors is one of the principal editorial goals of ANIMATO! In the coming issues, we hope to profile all of the talented performers mentioned in the last three letters!
GMD

Hearing Voices From Page 27

indeed that's Mel and Shirley (both mechanically sped) as Porky and Petunia Pig singing Harry Warren's *Would You Like to Take a Walk* in Bob Clampett's charming 1939 Looney Tune *Naughty Neighbors*.

So there we are - two more of the unjustly obscure names from animation's past, Jack Lescoulie and Shirley Reed, recognized at last. As Hames Ware said in his previous columns, there are many more voices from cartoons yet to be described and given their due, and quite a few mysteries remaining to solve as well. And by the way, should any readers out there know of other voices (in particular, any radio buffs, animators, and/or relatives of obscure and deceased performers) please get in touch with either Hames Ware, Graham Webb or myself through ANIMATO! the only animation magazine today both willing and gracious enough to provide a forum for this admittedly esoteric, but fascinating subject.

And 'til next time (cue Bosko), "So long, Folks!"



Reviews - From Page 6

While much of the 6,000 images are reproduced as small as a postage stamp and in black and white, it does give a remarkable overview to the various art styles and approached of American studio animation, although the book is almost completely devoted to the Disney studio (from pages 34 to 363). Each image is identified by size, medium and whether it's a cel, production drawing model sheet, etc. The prices have been determined through the results at animation art auctions. Lotman explains the different kinds of animation art, and gives keys to identifying just what the history of a particular piece of art might be.

This is an immense undertaking, and it's understandable that mistakes are bound to pop up. For instance, under the "Unknown Studios" section, several Betty Boop cels are listed which are clearly images from the colorized shorts from the early 1970s. Two Superman cels are also pictured there that appear to be from the Filmation series of the 1960s. Another serious drawback for the animation fan is that while artwork from features is identified, almost none of the art from short subjects lists a title. There are also a few historical errors in the introductions of the studios.

With a hefty \$125.00 price tag, this is a book for the serious animation fan. Despite its problems, it is an asset to any animation library.
GMD

Peter Puck – Continued From Page 24

on Hockey Night in Canada, cutting costs by performing "limited animation" of his own, mixing the cartoon with archival hockey footage. "I didn't have much of a budget, so I would have Peter skip across the screen for 30 seconds, and say, 'I'm going to tell you a story from my hockey history book,' and then I'd go to the videotape and have Peter's voice do the voiceover, and some famous Stanley Cup game footage would air while Peter described it. Then he'd say, 'That's it. Join me for another story from my hockey history book.' That was a very inexpensive way to keep Peter going for a while."

Peter Puck retired from television in 1980, but McFarlane has kept the character alive. For many years, the wisecracking rubber biscuit has appeared at shopping malls, skate-a-thons, and other public appearances. Also appearing with Peter has been a companion, Penny Puck (actually a Peter Puck costume with a hair bow on top).

"Peter goes over terrific. You have to have an escort for him, because kids will grab him by his gloves, or leave sticky fingers on his backside, try to grab his gloves and run away, that sort of thing. Every time there's an appearance, I always tell the guy in the costume ahead of time to follow some simple rules - when you're in the costume, you are Peter Puck to all these kids, and Peter doesn't talk at shows like he talks on TV because he's shy. So one day I've got a guy

playing Peter Puck at a mall opening, and the local TV station wants to ask 'Peter Puck' a question, so they point a camera at him and say, 'What's your name?' And the guy inside Peter Puck goes, 'I'm Johnny Smith from St. Catherines! Welcome to the mall!'"

Today, MacFarlane splits his time between Brian McFarlane's Hockey Museum in Niagara Falls, Ont., and his duties with the Society for International Hockey Research (SIHR). Some of the classic NBC episodes air on a television screen in his museum, in an area called the "Peter Puck Theatre."

Originally possessing the Canadian rights to the character, McFarlane recently acquired the worldwide rights to Peter Puck from Hanna-Barbera. "It took me a matter of years to renegotiate the worldwide rights to Peter Puck. I had confidence the guy could be popular once again, and if we were going to do this, there's no reason why we shouldn't do this for the world market. I think I'm the only guy in the world that has confidence that this character deserves a comeback."

Every so often, a hockey team calls McFarlane and asks him about using Peter Puck for their television broadcasts, or in putting him on their video scoreboard. "I get a call at least once a week from somebody, whether it's the new team in Charlotte or some team in Texas or the midwest, saying 'Who is this Peter Puck? Someone said we should phone you and see if

we can't use Peter Puck on our arena scoreboard.'"

A Peter Puck Fan Club that boasted thousands of members in the mid-1970's still exists today, and three books - Peter Puck: Love That Hockey Game (1975), Peter Puck and the Stolen Stanley Cup (1980), and Peter Puck's Greatest Moments in Hockey (1980) - are now collector's items.

McFarlane is currently negotiating with Malofilm, a Montreal production company, to digitally clean the nine NBC episodes, combine them with some new animation to update some rules and history, and release the entire collection on video. A Peter Puck Christmas special is being planned, as well as a CD-ROM and another children's book, Peter Puck and the Runaway Zamboni.

Meanwhile, Peter Puck has laced up his skates once again, ready to entertain and educate hockey fans throughout North America. And as Peter himself would say while skating off into the sunset, "Love that hockey game!"



Chuck Miller is a freelance writer based in Albany, NY. This is his first article for ANIMATO!, and he couldn't have picked a better subject as ANIMATO! publisher Patrick Duquette is an avid hockey fan!



KANE – From Page 40

tried staging a comeback several times. When Debbie Reynolds portrayed her in the MGM musical *Three Little Words* (1950), Kane's career was largely forgotten.

The year before her death, she had appeared on the Ed Sullivan's long-running variety show in her last comeback effort. She had fought cancer for ten years prior to her passing according to her obituary in *Variety*.

Today, performers have greater legal protection over their features and trademark mannerisms and appearances. What Kane endured could not happen again. GMD



Toons 'N Tea – From Page 14

the BFG, Big Friendly Giant. A kind of grandfatherly Sandman, the BFG specialises in catching dreams to benefit the world's children: unfortunately the neighbour giants prefer to guzzle the kiddies up. Naturally, Sophie and the BFG team up to defeat the carnivores, enlisting the aid of the British Army and Queen Elizabeth II.

I first saw *The BFG* in a cinema summer matinee, and was struck by how little its TV roots showed: in fact, it looked considerably more impressive than most non-Disney features. Three years and £3 million in the making, the film has an attention to detail reminiscent of vintage Bluth, especially the scenes set in BFG's magic workshop. Moreover, it's one of the few recent cartoons that takes full advantage of its fantasy format. The scene where Sophie and her giant friend travel to the mist-filled dream-cave conveys a wonder that pictures like *The Pagoda* never come close to delivering. Like all Cosgrove-Hall productions, the voice-

acting is excellent, with the ubiquitous David Jason (Dangermouse, Duckula and Toad in *The Wind in the Willows*) adding another fine performance to his repertoire with the BFG.

In retrospect, the most interesting aspect of the film is how Cosgrove-Hall struck a compromise between the "Disneyfication" of most cartoon features and the Brit tendency to stay close to the original. On the one hand, *The BFG* is a musical (the songs, incidentally, are excellent) with the usual anthropomorphic cast and cute touches. On the other, C-H never lost sight of Dahl's offbeat - some would say perverse - vision: what other film would have giants who actually eat children, or a title character who sings an ode to farting? Even Nicholas Roeg's live-action, *The Witches* watered Dahl down for audience consumption. But like *Box of Delights*, *The BFG* is a rare example of a commercial film staying stubbornly true to its source material - an attitude which, in these two cases, worked wonders.



KOPP – From Page 48

One *Pith Possum* gag turned out to be a nightmare for Kopp and DeGrandis. The titles, which all feature some variant of the word “dark,” had nothing to do with the stories.

“You don’t know what’s going on!” He laughs. “You’d get to post production and somebody would ask, ‘On *The Dark Quest of the Dark Night of Darkness*, do you want the bass up on the music?’ ‘What show was that? There’s no way to tell.’ They took to carrying around sheets with the titles and synopses in order to keep the episodes straight!”

Kopp enjoys watching the adventures of another animated superhero, *The Tick*. “It’s a great stab at superheroes. It’s like what I try to do with *Pith*, but *Pith*’s more over the top comical. I like the fact that his supervillains stay at a Motel 6 and stuff. And I really think that it’s just one of the funniest shows on the air.”

Although he was a few hours from seeing a

completed episode at the time of this interview, he also admires the production design of MTV’s *The Maxx*. “If the show’s as good as the drawings look, Man! It just looks cool.”

He is also partial another MTV super being, *Aeon Flux*, which was created by yet another of his Cal Arts classmates—Apparently they had one amazing graduating class that year—Peter Chung.

“Peter needs to be making features. . . He can draw so good it makes you cry,” he says. He admits, though to being a little disappointed that future *Aeon Flux* episodes will be done in English, rather than the garbled fictional language that’s been used to date.

When half-jokingly asked if he’d consider doing a voice for *Aeon Flux*, he half-jokingly answers, “I’m sure I could, but it would be better if it was [mumbles briefly in Flux-speak] like it used to be.”

Rich – From Page 18

you’re talking about character animation, where the character has to form the expression, I think we’re quite away from where that will come into being.”

Interestingly, with so many new advances on its side, Richard Rich says that what will make *Feathertop* unique are some elements that are actually hallmarks of animation. “Even though it’s a fairy tale, we’re going to be much more contemporary. *Swan Princess* was a traditional, classic fairy tale. In *Feathertop* we’re going to take on a more contemporary sound, we’re going to push our music more contemporary, the characters are going to talk more contemporary. We’re going to make it just a little more hip.”

With his studio now moving full swing, how does Rich feel about competing with his former employer? “We’re not so much competing with Disney, as we are competing with audience expectation,” he says, but does note that Disney’s ability to promote their projects from “within”, (through theme parks, Disney stores, etc), has been a little tough to go up against. “The difficulty comes for us in the marketing of it, where they [Disney] can expend such huge amounts of money to put the product before the public.” For the most part, however, Rich doesn’t mind the competition, “I think it’s wrong for one studio to have a monopoly on animation. I think as more and more studios get into the marketplace and the public learns that

its not only Disney that can do it, it will make it easier for all of us to compete in that marketplace. It will take a little bit of time to break down that barrier that ‘only Disney can do it.’ That’s what I was up against for years.” He also adds, “I don’t think you can oversaturate animation. If it’s a good movie, people will go to see it and it won’t matter if it’s animated or live-action.”

This after all has been the foundation of Rich Animation Studios since its inception. “I think what helps us are family values and the drive to come back to all of that,” says Richard Rich. “The reason that I’m in animation is because I have six kids and I don’t want to have to make films that my kids can’t go and see and in animation, no one expects that. There’s no swearing and there doesn’t have to be any of that. It can be very idealistic, uplifting, high morals, high achievement. Because, that’s what animation does, it caricatures real life and good can be super good, bad can be super bad. So, I think animation is like fairy tales: they’ll always be around.”

It seems that in an age where faster and slicker are the norm and yesterday’s trends are out of style by tomorrow, the well-crafted family animated film will always have a safe harbor at Rich Animation Studios.

Mike Lyons is a Long Island, NY-based freelance writer who frequently contributes to ANIMATO!

The thought immediately causes him to ponder an *Eek! the Cat/Aeon Flux* crossover, and he pipes up in his Eek voice, “Jeepers! Hey lady, are you cold? Can I get you a sweater or something?”

It’s that trademark ability to find the bizzare in every situation that makes Bill Kopp stand out from most of the dozens of animators who’ve been given a shot at stardom during the current boom in television animation.

And whether he chronicles the adventures of *Shnookums and Meat*, *Betty of the Jungle*, or some other looney creation, let’s hope that he’ll be sharing his unique perspective with us for decades to come!

Judith Reboy is regular contributor to ANIMATO!

Distinction – From Page 59

promoting Disney pictures. We promoted *Bambi* on video down in Australia, and *Jungle Book* in England, France and Germany. We’re like the Disney ambassadors. We go to galleries that invite us in the US...and sign things for people who like to have things signed. They buy a cel, and pay \$5,000 for it, they like to have our names on it. A lot of drawings are for sale now, and we know so much about the drawings that we can usually recognize who did them over the years.

FT: I’m talking at studios and schools now, and what I tell them is that you have to believe in it and love it, or you can’t do it in the first place. Just because you do all the right things doesn’t mean you’re going to have a good picture. You need six, eight, ten people who all believe the same thing and all hang together. What’s the magic ingredient? Talent, luck, and the right combination of people. Like Thumper says, “you can do it, Bambi.”

(Thanks to Laine Ross at Animation USA Gallery in Seattle and Tim O’Day at Disney for helping to arrange this interview. —GW).

Gord Wilson is an animation historian and writer whose trivia contests have been in previous issues of ANIMATO!



FROM THE INKWELL



Opening Pandora's Box...

Anime has been receiving a lot of attention lately from the mainstream press. *Newsweek*, *The New York Times* and other publications are covering anime, and it hasn't all been positive.

As is the nature of mainstream reporters who are given a subject without the luxury of much preparation time, they've given much attention to the very aspects of anime which they know will quickly get the readers' attention, sex and violence.

Hey, I'm no prude (witness my complimentary review for *Ninja Scroll* in the last issue), but I did recently farm out a review of a new tape after watching the first ten minutes of it. Vivid depictions of gang rape aren't my idea of entertainment. Life is too short, and I have too many tapes to review to spend my time watching something that makes me cringe.

I'm afraid that with all of the talk about just how awful is the influence of cartoons on impressionable audiences that self-appointed media censors will tar all of anime with the same brush.

As evident in our review section, there are many entertaining anime productions out there for animation fans to discover and enjoy. So fans, producers and importers of anime please note, while a little T&A isn't going to make or break a production in my opinion, the routine use of graphic material could indeed give the anime industry here some real problems.

When is Disney not Disney?

I thought the results of this summer's box office scores was fairly interesting. While on paper *Pocahontas* did just fine, it was not the money-maker of previous Disney animated summer outings not did it create much fan buzz. Bank on this prediction...there's going to be plenty of left-over *Pocahontas* toys in the stores this year. Believe it or not, *The Goofy Movie*, the Disney equivalent of a B film, got fans

more excited. Why? Because Goofy (and the cast from tv's *Goof Troop*) are appealing to the family audience.

The Goofy Movie is not considered "official" Disney by some as it was animated largely overseas and was developed from a television program. What piffle! Disney-philes are going to have to deal with an interesting trend in the company...some of their best animated films are not coming through the traditional Disney production pipeline. After all, *Nightmare Before Christmas* was produced outside of the studio as was the up-coming *Toy Story*. Animation fans should be prepared to see more and more animated films bankrolled but not produced by Disney. What would Walt think? I don't know. I don't know what he'd think of turning Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* into an animated musical!

Stern Ambushes John K.

In some circles, people have the opinion that I bash John K. pretty much at will. Not true. I truly felt sorry for him when I saw a broadcast of the Howard Stern program over the E cable channel this summer. It seems Stern had asked John up to the show in order to ambush him with a discussion involving whether or not Stern co-star Billy West had stabbed John in the back by staying with *Ren and Stimpy* after John was booted off the series. John obviously thought he was getting a chance to promote his new Spumco activities on a national radio show.

I felt sorry for Billy as well as the tension increased during the show to a point that it went far beyond the usual Stern locker room discussion. Both men were obviously uncomfortable with what was happening. Issues were brought up which definitely replayed the finger-pointing of almost three years. Nothing was accomplished except for the self-proclaimed "King of All Media" to get

some yuks at others' discomfort.

At the heart of the show was an issue which, thanks to Stern, was pretty well left untouched...just how much loyalty should a member of a creative team show when the head of the team is removed? As West did point out, someone was going to do the voice and he had to audition for it, despite the fact he was already the voice artist on the show. It's a painful and fascinating ethical problem.

Finally, some news about this issue...

I have to call attention to Mark Martin's wonderful new "headers" that are at the beginning of many of our regular features. Mark is one of my favorite artists whose work was seen in comic books such as *Tantalizing Stories*, *Gnatrat*, *20 Nude Dancers* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. He's a great guy, and I'm proud as punch to have him here as part of ANIMATO!. By the way, Mark's work can currently be seen in *Nickelodeon Magazine*.

Speaking of being proud as punch, USA Today ran a review of ANIMATO! in the Sept. 19, 1995 edition that read in part that ANIMATO! "is as much fun to read as the subject is to watch." Slowly, but surely, the word is getting about ANIMATO! and our phone has been ringing off the hook since that review.

The great unsung hero of this magazine continues to be our lay-out man Gene Gumbs. Gene always responds to the challenges of making my fever dream layout ideas into a reality.

Finally, due to a problem with logistics, we are not going to be ChillerCon in October as previously announced. Come hell or high water, though, the magazine will be back at the east coast's premiere pop culture convention in the spring. Be sure to visit us at our table!

Everything you thought about animation is about to change forever.

The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb

A nursery crime of epic proportions...



"Dazzlingly Twisted" — New York Post

"Recommend 'Tom Thumb' to those who claim they can't be affected by animation, then check out the goose bumps after they pop it in." — Video Business 9/15/95

"Startling, disturbing and super creepy, highly recommended viewing" — Wired

Nothing is likely to prepare you for your entry into the astonishing timeless world created by the award-winning UK bolexbrothers' director Dave Borthwick, where strange humans are animated, latex figures breathe as if alive and objects and odd creatures crinkle and crunch in the corner. It's a world of genuine horror and moving moments that has the power to unsettle and enchant in equal measure.



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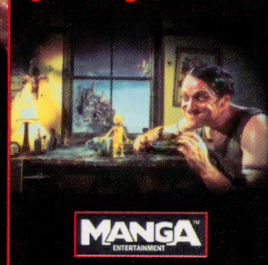
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